Never the Twain Shall Meet

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~~Mrs James Angus Dun~~

Carl R. Ring
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TAMEA, QUEEN OF RIVA

NEVER THE TWAIN SHALL MEET

BY

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CAPPY RICKS RETIRES,
THE PRIDE OF PALOMAR,
KINDRED OF THE DUST, ETC.

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To a Little Girl—
who believed
that when the fairies married,
one might, by lying very quietly
in the grass,
hear the bluebells ringing

Never the Twain Shall Meet

CHAPTER I

IT was a song that never before had been sung; once sung, never again would it be heard. Such a song, indeed, as little girls croon to their dolls; half funeral chant, half hymn, sung in a minor key by a girl with a powerfully sweet lyric soprano. The last of the land breeze carried it aft to Gaston Larrieau, the master of the 200-ton auxiliary trading schooner Moorea, where he stood on the top step of the companion, his leonine head and tremendous shoulders showing above the deck house, as he smoked his first after-breakfast pipe.

While he listened, a shadow passed over the man's face, as when winds drive a dark cloud above a sunny plain. He removed his pipe thoughtfully to murmur:

"Ah, my poor Tamea! Dear child of the sun! Homesick already!" Then he came out on deck and stood by the weather rail, looking forward until he espied the figure of the singer stretched face downward, at full length, alongside the bowsprit, but snuggled comfort-

ably in the belly of the jib. One arm enveloped the bowsprit; at each rise and fall of the Moorea's long clipper bow, her feet, sandal-clad, beat the canvas in rhythm. And, because she was young and athrill with the music of the spheres, because the dark blue water purling under the schooner's forefoot brought to her memories of the insistent, peaceful swish of the surf enveloping the outer reef at Riva, the girl Tamea sang:

"Behold! Tamea, Queen of Riva,
Has forsaken her mother's people.
In her father's great canoe called Moorea
After the mother of Tamea, who loved him,
Tamea sails over a cold sea
To the white man's country.
Tamea is happy and curious.
But if the hearts in this new land
Are cold as the fog this morning,
Then will the heart of Tamea grow heavy.
Then will she weep for a sight of Riva.
Then will she yearn for love and pleasure,
For dancing and feasting; for the water
White on the reef where the fishermen stand . . ."

"I must shake her out of that mood," Larrieau muttered, and strode aft to the wheel. The Tahitian helmsman gave way to him and as the master put the helm down and the schooner came sharply up into the wind and hung there shivering her canvas until it cracked like pistol shots, Tamea rose briskly from her hammock in the belly of the jib and stood poised on the bowsprit,

with one hand clasping the jib to steady her. The suddenness with which she had been disturbed and the air of regal hauteur she assumed as she faced aft for an explanation from the Tahitian helmsman, who had now resumed the wheel and was easing the Moorea away on her course once more, brought a bellow of Brobdingnagian laughter from Larrieau.

Tamea came aft with stately tread, pausing at the forward end of the deck house. "So it was you, great, wicked Frenchman," she cried in a Polynesian dialect. "Truly, my father forgets that he is but a wandering trader, while I am Tamea, Queen of Riva!" Simulating a royal fury she was far from feeling, Tamea grasped a bucket attached to a rope, dropped it overboard, drew it back filled with water and, poising it in position to hurl its contents, advanced to the assault.

"*Tiens!*" Gaston Larrieau chuckled. "I shall never succeed in making a Christian of you. It is written that even a queen shall honor her father and mother; nevertheless you, my own child, would dishonor me with sea water!" As she threatened him laughingly, he leaped for the opposite corner of the deck house, and she saw that it was his humor to invite the deluge. Wherefore, with the perversity of her sex and royal blood, she deluged the helmsman, who stood grinning at her.

"Your eye belongs on the lubber's mark, on the sails, on the horizon—anywhere but on me, Kahanaha," she

admonished the amazed fellow. And then, while Gaston Larrieau, momentarily off guard, stood roaring great gales of laughter at the discomfited Kahanaha, Queen Tamea of Riva dashed into his face fully a quart of water remaining in the bucket. She smiled upon Larrieau adorably.

"He laughs best who laughs last. Kahanaha, you may laugh."

Larrieau dashed the water from his bush of a beard. "*Nom d'un chien!* This is mutiny. Tamea, come here!" But Tamea merely wrinkled her nose at him, and when he charged at her she cried aloud, half delighted, half deliciously apprehensive, and started up the starboard main shrouds. Her father followed her, moving, despite his sixty years and his tremendous bulk, with something of the ease and swiftness of a bear.

At the masthead Tamea cowered, pretending to be frightened and cornered, until his hand reached for her slim ankle; when without the slightest hesitation she sprang for the backstay and went whizzing swiftly down to the deck. Here she threw him a peace offering, in the way of a kiss, but he ignored her. From the masthead he was looking out over the low-lying smear of fog that shrouded the coast of California, and the girl thrilled as his stentorian voice rang through the ship.

"Land, ho!"

Within a few minutes the Moorea had slipped through the cordon of fog into the sunshine. Off to starboard the red hull of the lightship loomed vividly against the blue of sea and sky; a white pilot schooner ratched lazily across their bows, while off to port three gasoline trawlers out of San Francisco coughed violently away toward the Cordelia banks, their hulls painted in bizarre effects of Mediterranean blue with yellow decks and upper works. Their Sicilian crews waved tassled, multicolored tam-o'-shanter caps at Tamea and when she threw kisses to them with both hands they shouted their approval in ringing fashion.

From Point San Pedro on the south to Point Reyes on the north fifty miles of green, mountainous shore line sweeping down abruptly to ocher-tinted bluffs lay outspread before Tamea. She viewed it with mixed feelings of awe, delight and a half sensed feeling of apprehension, for all that enthralling vision impressed her with the thought that beyond the indentation which her father called to her was the Golden Gate, lay another world of romance, of dreams, curiosity-compelling, palpitant with something of the same warmth that had nurtured Tamea in the little known, seldom visited and uncharted island kingdom under the Southern Cross. Following the fashion of her people when their emotions are profoundly stirred, again Tamea's golden voice was lifted in a semi-chant, an improvised pæan of appreciation.

Down through the entrance the Moorea ramped, with Tamea standing far out on the bowsprit, as if she would be the first to arrive, the first to see the wonders she felt certain lurked just around the bend behind crumbling old Fort Winfield Scott. As she leaned against the jib stay and held on with her elbows she searched the shore line with her father's marine glasses until, the Moorea having loafed up to the quarantine grounds, the crew disturbed the girl in order to take in the headsails.

They were scarcely snugged down before the Customs tug scraped alongside. While Gaston was down below in the cabin presenting his papers for the inspection of the port officer, a representative of the Public Health Service examined the crew on deck. Before Tamea he stood several moments in silent admiration. Then he asked:

"Miss, do you speak English?"

Tamea looked him over with frank admiration and approval. "You bet your sweet life I speak English," she replied melodiously; and from her English the doctor knew that she also spoke French. Having heard her giving an order to the Kanaka steward in an alien tongue, he concluded she spoke Hawaiian and sought confirmation of that conclusion.

"No, mister, I do not speak Hawaiian," said Tamea. "I can understand much of it, because all Polynesian languages are derived from the same Aryan source.

The difference between the hundreds of languages in Polynesia is mostly one of dialect—phonetic differences, you know."

He sighed. "I didn't know, but I'm glad to find out —from you. Are you Venus or Juno or one of the Valkyries from some tropical Valhalla?"

"Now you grow very queer," she retorted soberly. "You make the josh, and I do not like men who do that. I am Tamea Oluolu Larrieau. I am the Queen of Riva, and in Riva it is taboo to josh the Queen."

"I think the Queen is a josher, however," he replied gravely.

"Ah! You do not believe, then, that I am the Queen of Riva?"

"No, I do not. You're the Queen of Hearts."

Fortunately for Tamea she knew how to play casino and was, therefore, acquainted with the queen of hearts. Hence she could assimilate the compliment, and a ravishing smile was the reward of the daring doctor.

He bowed low.

"Will Tamea Oluolu Larrieau, Queen of Riva—wherever that may be, if it isn't another name for Paradise, since an houri has come from Riva—oblige a mere mortal by opening her mouth, sticking out her tongue and saying, '*Ah-h-h!*'—like that."

"Why?" There was suspicion in Tamea's glance now.

"It is a ceremonial peculiar to this country, Your

Majesty. It is required of all visitors, of whatever rank. An Indian prince did it yesterday and a *dato* from Java will do it this afternoon."

Tamea shrugged—a Gallic shrug—and complied.

"What a lovely death it would be to be fatally bitten by those teeth! Now, just one more ceremonial, if you please. It is required that I shall look into your eyes very closely. You may have trachoma, but if you have I'll never survive the shock of having to deport you."

Again Tamea shrugged. A peculiar custom, she thought, but one that was not difficult to comply with.

"Well, if you're a fair sample of the womanhood of Riva, O Tamea Oluolu Larrieau, I'm mighty glad that I'm not a practicing physician there. I should never earn a fee."

"And if you should earn a fee nobody would think of paying it," she laughed. "Perhaps, if you liked bananas or coconuts——" And her shoulders came up in collaboration, as it were, with an adorable little *moue*. The young doctor laughed happily.

"Alas! God help the poor missionaries with sirens like her on every hand," he thought as he descended into the cabin, where Larrieau was in conference with an immigration official touching his daughter's right to land. This detail was, happily, quickly passed and the health officer tapped Gaston Larrieau on the arm.

"Captain, it will be necessary for me to give you a

physical examination before I can issue your vessel a clean bill of health."

"Open your mouth and say, '*Ah-h-h!*' " commanded Tamea, who had followed the doctor below. "Then open your eyes and look wise. Is my father not a frail little man, eh?" she demanded of the doctor.

"The examination of this physical wreck is merely a matter of routine, Your Majesty."

Gaston Larrieau came close to the doctor and opened his cavernous mouth.

"*Ah-h-h!*" he said.

"Ah!" the doctor repeated softly—and touched lightly, in succession, a slightly puffed spot high up on each of the captain's cheeks. As he pressed the color fled, leaving a somewhat sickly whitish spot that stood out prominently in an otherwise ruddy face. A moment later the spots in question had regained their original color, which had been a ruddiness somewhat less pronounced than the surrounding tissue.

Perhaps only a doctor's eye—an eye especially alert for such spots—would have detected them.

"Is this not a fine doctor, father Larrieau!" Tamea exclaimed almost breathlessly. "You open your mouth —and he looks at your eyes!"

The health officer glanced at her. A minute before he had noted particularly the glory of her complexion —pale gold, with an old-rose tint, very faintly diffused through the clear skin, like a yellow light masked by a

pale pink silk cloth. Now the rose tint was gone and old ivory had replaced the pale gold. There was a gleam of excitement, of fear, in her smoky eyes, and the smile which accompanied her attempted badinage was just a bit forced. As the glances of the two met each realized that the other *knew!*

"I cannot help it; I must do my duty," the doctor murmured helplessly, and turned to look down Gaston Larrieau's open throat. "Any soreness in the nose, Captain?"

"A little, of late, Doctor."

"Any other pain?"

"Well, for a couple of months I've had a small, steady pain in my right shoulder—like rheumatism."

"No. It is neuritis." He picked up the captain's ham-like hand and noted on the back of it, close to the knuckles, the same faintly white, puffy spots. "Now please remove your shirt."

Tamea's eyes closed in momentary pain before she retired to a stateroom adjoining the main cabin. Larrieau removed his shirt and the doctor examined his torso critically. On his back, partially covering the right scapula, he found that which he sought. "That will be all," he informed Larrieau. "Replace your garments."

An assistant poured some disinfectant on his hands and he washed them vigorously in it, wiping them on a handkerchief which he tossed overboard through a

porthole. At a sign from the doctor the others went on deck.

He lighted a cigarette and when Larrieau faced him inquiringly he said:

"Now, regarding your daughter, Captain. What are your plans for her?"

"I have brought her up to San Francisco to place her in a convent to complete her education. As you have observed, she speaks English very well, but with a very slight French accent. She has had some schooling in English, but not very much."

"Her mother, I take it, is a Polynesian."

"Pure-bred Polynesian. She died a year ago, during the influenza epidemic."

"Forgive me, Captain, if my questions appear impertinent. They are not, strictly speaking, questions which I should ask you, but under the circumstances the immigration officer has left the asking of them to me. Have you or your daughter any friends or relatives in this country?"

"We have no relatives, Monsieur Doctor, and the only friends I have in this country are my owners."

"Is your financial situation such that, should you be taken away from your daughter, she would be provided for to the extent that she would not be likely to become a public charge?"

Gaston Larrieau smiled. "And you ask that of a Frenchman, to whom thrift is a virtue? I have not

traded among the South Pacific islands more than thirty-five years to come away without the price of a peaceful old age. I am worth a quarter of a million dollars, and with the exception of a few pearls and a quarter interest in this vessel, all of my fortune is in cash."

"Did you plan to return to the Islands after placing your child in school here?"

"*Parbleu*, no! No one could manage Tamea without my help. I am finished with the sea. All of my interests and those of Tamea in the South have been sold. Two years hence, when Tamea has grown used to civilized customs, we will return to France—to Brittany, where I was born."

"Tamea will probably marry well in France," the doctor suggested.

"Yes. We Frenchmen are more democratic than Americans or the English in our choice of wives. The fact that my Tamea is half Polynesian—ah, they would not forget that, though she is more wonderful than a white girl! I was married to her mother," he added, as if he suspected the doctor might secretly be questioning that point. "We were married by the mission priest in Nukahiva."

The doctor finished his cigarette and suddenly hurled the butt through the porthole. "Lord!" he growled. "I'm so tired of breaking people's hearts and shattering their hopes."

"Eh? What is that? Have you, then, unpleasant news for me?"

The doctor nodded gravely. "Captain, I have very unpleasant news for you. Dreadful news, in fact. While I hesitate to state so absolutely until a microscopic examination has been made and the presence of the bacillus in your body determined beyond question, I am morally certain that you have contracted—leprosy!"

The master of the Moorea met the terrible blow as a ship meets an unexpected squall. He flinched and trembled for a moment, then righted himself. His wind-and-sun-bitten face and neck went greenish white; his eyes closed for perhaps ten seconds; his shoulders sagged and his great breast heaved with a single sigh. In those ten seconds old age appeared to have touched him for the first time. When his eyes opened again he was the same calm, good-natured, almost boyish man who had romped through the rigging of the Moorea with his child that morning. He smiled a little sadly—and shrugged.

"Well, that's over," he murmured. "I am very sorry for you, Doctor. These things are very unpleasant. However, I have no regrets. I have enjoyed my life—down yonder—because nothing matters. There are not many rules and regulations—and we ignore them."

"It is different here."

"Alas, yes!"

"You are a naturalized citizen of the United States?"

"Yes, Monsieur Doctor."

"It is my duty to remove you from this schooner to the quarantine station at Angel Island. You will be held there for observation, and when the fact that you are a leper is officially determined, you will be removed to the Isolation Hospital in San Francisco. However, it might be arranged to have you sent to the colony at Molokai. If you were not a citizen of the United States you would be deported to the country of which you are a subject."

"We have said good-by to Riva and the South, and we are not going back. The white blood predominates in my girl; I want her to live her life among white men and women. Besides, she can afford it. She may marry some fine fellow here. Who knows? I had picked on Brittany for my old age—so Molokai will not do. *Bon dieu!* I should have such ennui in Molokai. I could not stand that."

"Rules and regulations, Captain," the doctor reminded him sympathetically.

Gaston Larrieau shook his head. "Old Gaston of the Beard caged like a pet monkey, eh? I think not." He sat down and tugged at his beard thoughtfully. "Well, one thing is certain," he continued. "It is more than seventeen years since I begot Tamea. I was clean then and for all the years since until this morning."

"Non-leprous children are born of leprous parents, Captain. Tamea is clean."

"She must not know that I am not."

"Ah, but she does know it."

Larrieau sprang erect, terrible. "You dared to tell her——" he roared, and advanced with upraised hand.

"Sit down. The girl has eyes, and in Riva she has, doubtless, seen more than one leper. I told her nothing. Listen, Captain."

From the stateroom came the sound of a muffled sob.

Larrieau sat down, dumb and distressed. "Yes, there is leprosy in Riva. And tuberculosis and worse. The scourges of our white civilization are creeping in and where they strike there is no hope. So I brought Tamea away—only to be stricken—— Well, I knew that was one of the risks I had to take, and a life without risks is as an egg without salt. In my day I have adventured in strange and terrible places, and while this is the very devil of a joke to have fate play on me, still"—he shrugged again—"I have lived my life and I have loved my love, and by the blood of the devil, life owes me nothing. I am ready! *Voilà!*" And the Triton snapped his fingers. "I am no mealy-mouthed clerk to go whimpering to my finish, protesting at the last that my heart is breaking with sorrow for my sins." He laughed his mellow, resonant, roaring laugh.

"No, no. Old Gaston of the Beard has enjoyed his

sins. They were not many, for I was ever a simple man, but such sins as I had—ah, they were magnificent! I have children in a hundred islands. But Tamea is the child of my love, and like her mother she is a glorious pagan."

"You say her mother is dead."

Gaston of the Beard nodded. "She was a queen and believed herself descended from her Polynesian gods. Damnation! She had every right to, for she was a goddess. Tall, Monsieur Doctor—six feet, for she came of a race of hereditary rulers and in Polynesia before the white men came to ruin and degenerate these children of nature, a king was not a king in very truth unless, standing among his people, he could gaze over their heads as one gazes over a wheat field from the top rail of a fence. Tamea's great-great-grandfather was deposed and exiled to an island five hundred miles to the west, where his enemies enslaved him. In his old age his people rescued him and offered him the scepter he had lost in his youth. But he would not accept, for age and toil had crooked his back and he could no longer stand head and shoulders over his people."

"What a magnificent old chap he must have been, Captain!" said the doctor.

Larrieau nodded. "Tamea's mother, Moorea, could walk! You, my young friend, have never seen a woman walk; it is a lost art; our women mince or hop or strut. Moorea was a beautiful woman in point of

features. Her hair was a wonderful seal-brown and her skin—well, her skin——"

"Was Tamea's," the doctor interrupted.

Gaston of the Beard smiled and nodded. "She was regal of bearing and regal of soul—and the missionaries called her a heathen. For years I kept them out of Riva, with their mummery of morals and religion. Why, there was no sin in Riva until I came—and then it wasn't recognized until the missionaries gave it a name. Monsieur Doctor, behold a man who dwelt in Eden until the serpents drove him out."

The doctor chuckled quietly.

"Tamea's mother," the sailor resumed, "had features as fine and regular as any white woman. But then, why should she not? Her blood was pure, because it was a chief's blood. The dark skin, the flat nose and the crinkly hair are souvenirs, in the Polynesian race, of their sojourn in the Fijis before they resumed their age-old hegira that started in Asia Minor. In the common people we find evidences of Papuan blood, and that is negroid, Monsieur Doctor. But the pure-bred Polynesian is not a nigger, as ignorant and stupid people might have you believe. They are a lost fragment of the Caucasian race, and any ethnologist who has studied them carefully and sympathetically knows this. Monsieur Doctor, they are not of Malayan origin, but Cushite, and the Cushites were an Aryan people, as doubtless you know."

"My knowledge of ethnology is very meager, Captain Larrieau," said the doctor.

"Mine is not. Gaston of the Beard they call me down under the Line, but I have a head to hold up my beard. How do you account for the fact that the Polynesian priesthood in Hawaii was possessed of the story of the Hebrew Genesis as early as the sixth century, and that, in many respects, this version is more complete than the Jewish?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," the doctor protested. He had the feeling that to argue with Larrieau was to argue with an encyclopedia.

"Well, they acquired the story while drifting eastward from the land of their origin and establishing contact with the Israelites, although on the other hand it may be an independent and original version of legends common to the Semite and Aryan tribes of the remote past and handed down to posterity quite as accurately as the Jewish version before the latter became a part of the literature of that race."

The doctor glanced at his watch. "Captain, it would be most delightful to linger and receive instruction in so interesting a subject, but we have a Japanese liner to clear before noon, so I must be off."

"But," persisted the sailor, "have I convinced you that, if this brutal and iconoclastic world but knew it, my little Tamea is *all* Caucasian, not merely half?"

"Captain, your daughter is the most dazzling, the most glorious woman I have ever seen."

"Would you care to marry her, Monsieur Doctor?" The words shot out from the man who had been condemned to a living death with calm but deadly earnestness. "That is," Larrieau continued, "provided you are not already married."

"I am engaged to be married, Captain."

"You have seen Tamea. It will not be hard to forget the other woman. Come, come, my boy! How does the proposition strike you?"

"It doesn't strike me at all. One does not accept such a proposition for consideration quite so abruptly, my friend."

"Ah, why not? Why not, indeed? Because others do not? Blood of the devil, what a horrible thing is tradition! If it were not a tradition that a woman shall accept from her fiancé a diamond ring which the idiot cannot, in all probability, afford to give her —well, women would not accept them. If it were the custom, they would accept a blow or a brass ring through the nose or a brand, with equal eagerness. Monsieur Doctor, he who has not learned to accept both good and evil, the usual and the unusual, abruptly and without mature consideration, has not learned to live. Life has not given him of its richness and fulness. Why be afraid? Why shrink from the silly comment of silly people who do not understand

when you have a woman with a glorious body, a glorious soul and a glorious mind, to compensate you?"

"I am not free to marry her——"

Gaston of the Beard brushed aside this feeble excuse with a quotation from Epictetus: " 'He only is free who does as he pleases.' "

But the young doctor was not to be persuaded by such philosophical considerations.

"Has your fiancée a *dot* of a quarter of a million dollars?" Larrieau shot at him.

"It is quite useless to discuss the matter, Captain."

The latter hung his head, disappointed. "You realize why I asked you, of course," he said presently.

"I do, Captain. You must see her provided for. You were at some pains to prove to me that her blood was the equal of mine——"

"I spoke of her mother's people. But I am not a common man. There is blood and breeding back of me—yes, far back, but I can trace it."

"You pay me a tremendous compliment, Captain."

"You are young, you have education, intelligence. You are a doctor, a man of broad human sympathy and understanding. It is too bad your spirit is not free. Too bad!"

"I will return for you this afternoon, about six o'clock, Captain. You will not attempt to leave the Moorea, will you?"

"I told you I was a thrifty man, but I did not tell you, also, that I am generous."

"I am rebuked, Captain Larrieau. Forgive me."

"On one condition. Give my vessel pratique—now."

"I dare say we can risk that. But why do you ask it?"

"So that young Mr. Pritchard, of Casson and Pritchard, my owners, may be permitted to come aboard, with an attorney. I have some business details to attend to before I accompany you to the quarantine shed at Angel Island. There is the business of the Moorea, and the financial future of my Tamea must be provided for."

"Do you wish me to return to the dock and telephone Mr. Pritchard?"

"If you will be so kind. And ask Mr. Pritchard to bring flowers—a great many beautiful flowers. We sons of Cush are childishly fond of flowers."

The health officer nodded and went over the side into the Customs tug with a constricted feeling in his throat. Had he not gone then he would have remained to weep, with Tamea, for old Gaston of the Beard!

CHAPTER II

IN his office in the suite of Casson and Pritchard, on the top floor of a building in the heart of San Francisco's financial district, Daniel Pritchard, the junior partner, sat with his back to his desk and his feet on the sill of a window that gave a view, across the roofs of the city, to the bay beyond. He was watching the ferryboats ply backward and forward between the old gray town and Oakland; viewed from that height and distance their foamy wakes held for him a subconscious fascination. Indeed, whenever he desired to indulge a habit of day-dreaming, the view from his window on a clear, warm day could quickly lull him into that state of mind. This morning Dan Pritchard was day-dreaming.

A buzzer sounding at his elbow aroused him. He reached for the inter-office telephone and murmured "Yes?" in the low-pitched, kindly, reassuring voice that is inseparable from men of studious habits and placid dispositions.

"The Moorea is passing in, Mr. Pritchard. The Merchants' Exchange lookout has just telephoned," his secretary informed him.

"Thank you." He glanced at his desk clock. "She

should clear quarantine and the Customs before noon, and Captain Larrieau should report in by one o'clock at the latest. You'll recognize him immediately, Miss Mather. A perfectly tremendous fellow with a huge black beard a foot long. When he arrives show him in at once, please. Meanwhile I'm not in to anybody else."

He resumed his day-dreaming, drawing long blissful drafts from a pleasant smelling pipe, his mind in a state of absolute quiescence in so far as business was concerned. He had that sort of control over himself; a control that rested him mentally and armed his nerves against the attrition that comes of the high mental pressure under which modern American business men so frequently operate.

At twelve-fifteen Miss Mather entered.

"The Meiggs Wharf office of the Merchants' Exchange telephoned that the Moorea has been given pratique, but that Captain Larrieau is ill and the health officer is going to have him removed to the quarantine station at Angel Island," she informed him. "Evidently his disease is not contagious, because the health officer said it would be quite safe for you to visit him. The Captain requests that you come aboard at your earliest convenience and that you bring an attorney and some flowers."

Dan Pritchard's eyebrows went up. "That request is suggestive of approaching dissolution, Miss Mather."

"Scarcely, Mr. Pritchard. If that were the case would the Captain not have requested the attendance of your doctor to confirm the health officer's diagnosis? And would he not have sent for a clergyman?"

"Not that great pagan! His approach to death would be marked by an active scientific curiosity in the matter up to the moment when his mind should cease to function. Please telephone Mr. Henderson, of Page and Henderson, our attorneys, and ascertain what hour will be convenient for him to accompany me to the Moorea."

"I have already done so, Mr. Pritchard. Mr. Henderson is playing in a golf tournament at Ingleside and will be finished about three o'clock. He is in the club-house now and says he can meet you at Meiggs Wharf at four o'clock, provided the matter cannot go over until tomorrow morning."

"It cannot. Old Gaston of the Beard is an impatient man, and this is an urgent call. Please telephone Mr. Henderson that I will meet him at Meiggs Wharf at four o'clock. Then telephone Crowley's boathouse to have a launch waiting there for us at five o'clock. When you have done that, Miss Mather, you might close up shop and enjoy your Saturday afternoon freedom."

"Thank you, Mr. Pritchard. Miss Morrison is in Mr. Casson's office. She said she might look in on you a little later."

When his secretary had departed he resumed his reverie, to be roused from it at twelve-thirty o'clock by the soft click of the latch as his office door was gently opened. He turned and observed a girl who stood in the general office, with her head and one shoulder thrust into Dan's office.

"May I come in?" she queried.

"Of course you may, Maisie. You're as welcome as a gale in the doldrums. The best seat in my office isn't half worthy of you." He rose and took her hand as she advanced into the room.

"Doing a little ground and lofty dreaming, I observe." The girl—her name was Maisie Morrison, and she was the niece of Casson, the senior member of the firm—seated herself in a swivel desk chair and looked brightly up at him as he stood before her, his somewhat long grave face alight with approval and welcome.

"It's very nice of you to pay me this little visit, Maisie," he declared. "And I like that hat you're wearing. Indeed, I don't think I have ever seen you looking more—er—lookable!"

It was like him to ignore her implied query and voice the thought in his mind.

"Sit down, Abraham Lincoln, do, please," she urged.

He obeyed. "Why do you call me Abraham Lincoln?"

"Oh, you're so long and loose-jointed and raw-

boned and lantern-jawed! Your shoulders are bowed just a little, as if from bearing great burdens, and when I caught a glimpse of your face, as I entered, it was in repose and incredibly sad and wistful. Really, Dan, you're a very plain man and very dolorous until you smile, and then you're easy to look at. Your right eyebrow is about a quarter of an inch higher than your left and that lends whimsicality to your smile, even when you are feeling far from whimsical."

His chin sank low on his breast and he appeared to be pondering something. "Perhaps," he said aloud, but addressing himself nevertheless, "it's spring fever. But then I have it in the summer, autumn and winter also. I want to go away. Where, I do not know."

"Perhaps you are suffering from what soul analysts call 'the divine unrest.'"

"I'm suffering from the friction that comes to a square peg in a round hole. That much I know. The round hole I refer to is the world of business, and I'm the square peg. The situation is truly horrible, Maisie, because the world believes I fit into that hole perfectly. But I know I do not."

Her calm glance rested on him critically but not sympathetically. In common with the majority of her sex she believed that men are prone to conjure profound pity for themselves over trifles, and her alert mind, which was naturally disposed toward practicalities, told her that Daniel Pritchard had, doubtless,

been up too late the night previous and had eaten something indigestible.

"This is an interesting and hitherto unsuspected condition, Dan. I have always been told, and believed, that you are a particularly brilliant business man."

"I am not," he objected, with some vehemence. "But if I am, that is because I work mighty hard to be efficient at a disgusting trade. I know I am regarded as being far from a commercial dud, for I am a director in a bank, a director in a tugboat company, and really the managing partner of Casson and Pritchard. But I loathe it all. Consider, Maisie, the monstrous depravity of dedicating all of one's waking hours to the mere making of money. Why, if any man of ordinary intelligence and prudence will do that for a lifetime he just can't help leaving a fortune for his heirs to squabble over. Making money isn't a difficult task. On the other hand, painting a great picture is, and if one's task isn't difficult and above the commonplace, how is one to enjoy it?"

"I was right," the girl declared triumphantly. "It is the divine unrest. You are possessed of a creative instinct which is being stifled. It requires elbow room."

He smiled an embarrassed little smile. "Perhaps," he admitted. "I like to work with my hands as well as with my head. I think I could have been happy as a surgeon, slicing wens and warts and things out of

people, and I could have been happiest of all if I had nothing to do except paint pictures. If I could afford it I would devote my life to an attempt to paint a better picture of Mount Tamalpais yonder, with the late afternoon sun upon it, than did Thad Walsh. And I do not think that is possible."

"That picture yonder," she said, pointing to an oil on the wall of his office, "indicates that you have excellent judgment. What is the subject, Dan?"

"Blossom time in the Santa Clara Valley."

"It's a beautiful thing and much too fine for a business office."

His face, on the instant, was alight with happiness. "Now, I'm glad to have you say that, Maisie, because *I* painted that picture."

"No!"

"Yes."

"But you never told us——"

"My dear Maisie, you must never breathe a word of this to anybody. If the world of business had discovered ten years ago that I would rather dabble in paint and oil than figure interest, it would not now be regarding me as a capable, conservative business man. I would be that crazy artist fellow, Pritchard."

She walked to a point where the best view of the picture was obtainable and studied it thoughtfully for several minutes.

"It's very beautiful and the colors are quite natural,

I think," was her comment. "What do you say it is worth, Dan?"

"Oh, about a million dollars in satisfaction over a good job accomplished, and fifty or a hundred dollars in the average art shop."

Maisie returned to her seat. "Well," she declared with an emphasis and note of finality in her tone that stamped her as a young woman of initiative and decision, "if I were as rich as you, Dan Pritchard, I'd continue to be a square peg in a round hole just long enough to send that picture home and then walk out of this office forever. How old are you?"

"Thirty-four, in point of years, but at least a hundred viewed from any other angle."

"Fiddlesticks! Why don't you retire and live your life the way you want to live it? I would if I were you. . . . Now, Dan, there you go again with that sad Abraham Lincoln look!"

"I am sad. I've just had a great disappointment. I told you I wanted to go away but that I didn't know where to go. Well, I did know where I wanted to go—until this morning. I had planned to take one more cruise with old Gaston of the Beard——"

"With whom?"

"Captain Gaston Larrieau, master of our South Seas trading schooner Moorea. I had planned to knock around with him in strange places for the next six months."

"I cannot visualize you making a pal of a sea captain, Dan."

"Nonsense, Maisie. Gaston is a satyr with a soul. Twelve years ago I took a cruise with him and I've never had time for another. Gaston of the Beard—my father dubbed him that thirty years ago and the name has stuck to him ever since—is like no other man living. He's about sixty years old now, six feet six inches tall, and weighs about two hundred and fifty pounds in condition. He's a Breton sailor with the blood of Vikings in him, and if I ever find the tailor who makes his clothes I'm going to pension the man in order to remove a monster from the sartorial world. When going ashore in a temperate climate Gaston affects very wide trousers, a long black Prince Albert coat, a top silk hat, vintage of 1880, and a stiff white linen shirt with round detachable cuffs bearing tremendous moss-agate cuff buttons. When he walks he waddles like a bear and when I walk with him I run.

"He is most positive in his likes and dislikes; he has read everything and remembers it; he plays every card game anybody ever heard of and plays them all well; he performs very well on the accordion, the flute and the French horn; he knows music and the history of music. He speaks four or five European languages and a dozen South Seas dialects. He is a sinful man, but none of his sins are secret. He loathes swanks, frauds and pretenders, and he bubbles with temperament.

When he is enthusiastic about anything or when he is angry, his voice rises to a roar; when he is touched he weeps like a baby. He knows more English poetry than any man living and is quite as much at home with the best of our modern literature as he is with all of the ancient classics. He knows all about ships and shipping since the days of the Phœnicians and the Hanseatic League; there are as many facets to his character as to a well cut diamond, and every facet sparkles. Good Lord, Maisie, the man's different, and I want a change."

"Well, then, as I said before, why not have it? You can afford it, Dan."

"That's the rub. I cannot. And even if I could I've just received word that Gaston of the Beard is ill with some sort of disease that requires his removal to quarantine. It must be a very serious illness, because he has sent for an attorney—to draw his will, doubtless. Henderson and I are going aboard at four o'clock this afternoon."

"But why can't you go for a cruise if and when your satyr recovers his health?"

"A man cannot drop a business just because he desires to. My going would disorganize everything and distress a great many people. I'm the binder that holds this organization together."

"Don't take yourself too seriously, Dan. You weren't born to daddy the world, you know. You worry

too much about other people and what will happen to them when they can no longer lean against you for support. Why not give them an opportunity to care for themselves for a change?"

From the tip of her small feet to the cockade on her dainty little hat, his calm, serious glance roved over her. "Well," he replied soberly, "how would you relish the prospect of caring for yourself—for a change?"

"I'm sure I do not know. I fear I'd be rather helpless—for a while."

"Do you think I ought to accord your uncle and aunt an opportunity to care for themselves—for a change?"

"Good gracious, no! Is there a possibility of that situation presenting itself?"

"An excellent possibility—if I elect to forget that I am a square peg in a round hole and doomed to remain such."

"Oh, Dan, I'm so sorry!"

"Sorry for whom?"

"For—everybody."

The slight hesitation between her words caused him to smile faintly. Vaguely he had hoped she would feel sorry for him exclusively. Her next question convinced him that Maisie, in common with the rest of the world, had a more alert interest in herself than in him.

"Then there is danger, Dan? Something may happen to us?"

"There is a possibility, Maisie. However, I must admit that my feeling that such a possibility exists is based on nothing tangible. If I leave the office for a long vacation, this firm will be in the position of a pugilist who has incautiously left a wide opening for his opponent to swat him to defeat."

"Whose fault is it?" said Maisie.

"I do not mean to criticize my partner, Maisie, but if, while I should be away, we climb out on the end of a limb and then somebody saws off the limb, the responsibility for our fall will be entirely your Uncle John Casson's. The man is an optimist, devoid of mental balance."

"Have you and Uncle John been quarreling, Dan?"

"No. What good does that do? If mischief is done, quarreling will neither avert nor cure it. In a business dilemma your uncle always loses his head, so I practise the gentle art of keeping mine!" He drew a chair up to her and prepared for a confidential chat. "You must know, Maisie, that following my entrance into this firm after my father's death we have had five narrow escapes from serious financial embarrassment, due to Mr. Casson's passion for taking long chances for large profits. And if five beatings fail to cure a man my opinion is that he is incurable. Holding that opinion as I do, I fear the result if I leave the office for more than a month and expose your uncle to temptation."

"It is kind of you to say that, Dan. Perhaps you have been too gentle with Uncle John. Perhaps if you had asserted yourself—"

He held up a deprecating hand. "Forgive me, Maisie, if I assure you that the only way to assert oneself with your avuncular relative is with some sort of heavy blunt instrument."

His bluntness caused her to flush faintly, but she kept her temper. "I believe your father and Uncle John quarreled frequently, Dan."

"Yes, that is true. But that was not because your uncle is a difficult man to get along with in the ordinary day to day business. He is a charming and agreeable old gentleman for whom I entertain a great deal of respect and affection. My father was undiplomatic, aggressive and extremely capable. For a quarter of a century he dominated the affairs of Casson and Pritchard, and before he died he warned me if I should take his place in the firm to do likewise." He was silent, looking out of the window at the ferryboats. "A horrible legacy," he said. "I loathe dominating people."

"Uncle John always resented your father's domination."

"I have observed that most people resent that which is good for them. Since my father's death your uncle has evinced a disposition to run hog-wild with power, as the senior member of the firm. The sublimated old jackass!"

"My uncle is nothing of the sort, Dan Pritchard."

He disregarded her protest, because he knew she had protested out of a sense of loyalty to an uncle who had stood in the place of a father to her since her fifth birthday. And John Casson, he knew, was both kind and indulgent. But he also knew that Maisie knew her relative was exactly what Dan Pritchard had called him.

"The first time Mr. Casson disregarded my youth and lack of business experience and jumped in over his head," Dan continued, "I hauled him out by the simple method of disregarding him and insuring all of our ledger accounts, because one of them was very doubtful. Well, we collected that insurance and all we were out was the premium. Your uncle talked of suicide when he thought he had ruined both of us, but when he discovered I'd saved the firm he accepted about seventy-five per cent of the credit for my perspicacity. In those days, Maisie, it wasn't necessary for us to have a very heavy loss in order to be embarrassed or ruined. All that saved us the last time was the war, which caught us with a flock of schooners on long time charters at low freight rates.

"Why, Maisie, I haven't dared to leave him alone for years. He is no longer a young man, and his naturally uncertain judgment hasn't improved with age. From August, nineteen fourteen, when the Great War began until April, nineteen seventeen, when this country joined

with the Allies, I admit I gambled. I gambled everything I had and I induced your uncle to gamble everything he had, and between us we committed Casson and Pritchard to a point miles in advance of what would, ordinarily, have been the danger point.

"I am a conservative in business, but I knew then that we were gambling on a rising market and that we would be safe while the war lasted. Even during the year and a half I was in the navy and your uncle had a free hand in the direction of our business, I did not worry. Those were the days when all radicals made quick fortunes because they just could not go wrong on charters and the prices of commodities. Three months after the armistice had been signed I returned to civil life and since then I have been very busy getting our firm out from under the avalanche of deflation which must inevitably follow this war, even as it followed the Civil War. It has not been an easy task, Maisie, for your uncle has developed a spirit of arrogance and stubbornness difficult to combat."

"Yes," Maisie agreed, "Uncle John has acquired a very good opinion of himself as a business man."

Pritchard nodded. "Those days when I was in the service and he operated alone have spoiled him. However, only this morning I succeeded in gaining his consent—in writing—to the sale, at a nice profit, of the last of our long-term charters at war rates. Now, if

I can hold him in line until the deflation process commences, I shall be well pleased with myself."

"Is the money burning a hole in Uncle's pocket?"

"I fear it is. He is seventy years old; yet, instead of planning to retire, he seethes with a desire to double his present fortune. He has dreams of vast emprise. I wish he had gout instead!"

"Casson and Pritchard is a partnership, Dan. Why do you not incorporate? Then if the business fails, through any indiscretion of Uncle John, you will not be responsible for more than your fifty per cent of the company's debts."

"Forty per cent, Maisie. I was admitted to partnership on that basis, although my father was an equal partner. However, his death terminated that partnership and I suppose Mr. Casson felt that with my youth and inexperience forty per cent was generous."

The girl was silent, gazing abstractedly out of the window. Dan realized that she was striving to scheme a way out for him, and he smiled in anticipation of what her plan would be. He was not mistaken.

"Dan," she said presently, "I believe you are more or less of a thorn in Uncle John's side. Why do you not sell out to him, retire and paint pictures? I feel certain he would be glad to buy you out."

He sighed. "There are several minor reasons and one major reason why such a course would be repugnant to me."

"Name them."

"Mr. Casson, Mrs. Casson and all of our employes constitute the minor reasons. You constitute the major one."

She flushed pleasurably and the lambent light of a great affection leaped into her fine eyes. He continued:

"I fear the old gentleman would make a mess of the business if my guiding hand should be withdrawn, and at his age—consider the sheltered life you have led, the ease and comfort and luxury and freedom from financial worry! Maisie, it would be a sorry mess, indeed."

"So you have concluded to hang on, eh, Dan?"

He nodded. "And while hanging on I hang back, like a balky mule on his halter."

" 'Go not, like the quarry slave, scourged to his dungeon,' " she quoted bitterly. "Nevertheless, I fail to see why a nice consideration of my—of our—comfort should deter you from seeking your own happiness."

"Why, Maisie, you know very well I'm terribly fond of you."

"Indeed, Dan! This is the first official knowledge I have had of it, although, of course, I have for years suspected that you and I were very dear friends. However, Dan, my friendship is not one that demands great sacrifices. I—I——"

Tears blurred her eyes and her voice choked, but she recovered her poise quickly. With averted face she said: "I'm sure, my dear Dan, I would much prefer

to see you painting your pictures than serving as a sacrifice on the altar of your—of our—friendship."

"I think I might be able to glean a certain melancholy happiness from the sacrifice," he protested.

"Dan Pritchard, you are exasperatingly dull today. I dislike being under obligation to anybody."

He held up a deprecating hand. "You know, Maisie, I have always given you my fullest confidence, as I would to a sister. And I do this in the belief that you will understand perfectly. My dear girl, I am not complaining because I have to stick by this business. I am merely voicing my disappointment at the impossibility of taking the sort of vacation I had planned. If I——"

A knock sounded on the door, and a moment later John Casson entered. He was a large, florid old gentleman, groomed to the acme of sartorial and tonsorial perfection—a handsome old fellow with a hearty and expansive manner, but a man, nevertheless, whom a keen student of human nature would instantly deduce to be one who thought rather well of himself.

"What? Dan, my boy, are you still on the job? Maisie, can't you induce him to drive to the country club with us? How about nine holes of golf?"

Dan Pritchard shook his head. "Not today, sir, thank you."

"No? Sorry, my boy. Maisie, are you ready to run along?"

"Yes, Uncle."

She rose hurriedly, went to the mirror in Dan's wash cabinet and powdered her nose. And while powdering it she studied critically the reflection, in that mirror, of Dan Pritchard's long, sad, wistful, thoughtful face. It was in repose now, for Casson had walked to the window and was looking out over the bay; and Maisie had ample opportunity to watch Dan and wonder what was going on inside that bent head.

"Sweet old thing," she soliloquized. "I love you so. I wonder if you'll ever know—if you'll ever care—if it will ever occur to you, dear dreamer, to diagnose that warm friendship and discover that it may be love. For just now, stupid, you talked of sacrifice—for me. Oh, Dan, I could beat you!"

She crossed the room silently and stood beside his chair. As he started, politely, to rise, she bent and placed her lips to his ear. "Art is a jealous mistress, I am told. I hope, Dan, you'll be as true to her as you can be. I'm almost jealous of her."

He glanced meaningly at old Casson, who was beating time with his fingers on the window-pane and striving to hum a popular fox-trot. "The old bungler!" Dan whispered. "Come in and visit me the next time you come to the office. And if you'll invite me over to dinner some night next week I shall accept. I want to continue our conversation. I——"

He glanced swiftly at Casson, saw that the old gen-

tleman was still preoccupied with his pseudo-valuable thoughts and decided to risk putting through a plan which had that instant popped into his head. He took Maisie's chin in thumb and forefinger, drew her swiftly toward him and kissed her on the lips. Old Casson continued to beat his unmusical tattoo on the window-pane, and Maisie, observing this, grimaced at his broad back and—returned Dan's kiss! For a breathless instant they stood staring at each other—and then old Casson turned.

"*Au revoir,* Danny dear," said Maisie in a voice that rang with joy.

"Good-by, Maisie. Good afternoon, Mr. Casson. I hope you'll enjoy your game."

"Thank you, boy. Ta-ta!"

Dan bowed them out of his office and returned to his seat by the window.

"Thunder!" he murmured presently. "Thunder, lightning and a downpour of frogs and small fishes! Now, what imp put into my silly head that impulse to kiss Maisie! I'm mighty fond of Maisie, but I'm not at all certain that I'd care to marry her—she's so practical and dominating and lovable. Such a good pal. I wonder if I'd be happy married to Maisie. . . . I'm a lunatic. When fellows of my mental type marry they give hostages to fortune, and I haven't lived yet. My life has been dull and prosaic—nothing new under heaven—and then I had that impulse—yes, that was

new! That kiss from Maisie was an adventure. It thrilled me. I wonder what put the idea into my fool head!"

If he had not been fully as stupid as Maisie gave him credit for being, he would have known that Maisie had put the idea into his head. Being what he was, however, he went down to Meiggs Wharf at four o'clock to meet Henderson, still obsessed with the belief that, all unknown to himself hitherto, he was a singularly daring, devilish and original character!

CHAPTER III

FOLLOWING the departure of the Customs tug, Gaston of the Beard had sat below in earnest converse with Tamea. The Triton had wept a little at first, albeit his tears were not for himself but for Tamea; and after her initial gust of despair and grief, the girl had remembered that strength and not weakness was what her father expected of her. Accordingly she had rallied to the task of comforting him.

"And you knew I had contracted this disease, my daughter?" old Gaston queried amazedly.

"*Oui, mon père.* I saw the puffy places on your cheeks and knuckles before we sailed from Riva, but I was not certain until I saw you one day in swimming. There is a white patch on your right shoulder."

"But you have touched me, Tamea. You have caressed me——"

"And shall again, dear one. The disease has but recently made its appearance. There are no active lesions and I am not fearful, father Larrieau."

"In this country, Tamea, when one is afflicted so, he is restrained of his liberty. He is confined in a hospital called the pesthouse. There are no men or women there with whom I should care to associate—and I am

old enough to die, anyhow. I would be free from this tainted body and dwell with your mother in Paliuli"—the Polynesian equivalent of heaven.

Tamea had no answer for this. All too thoroughly she divined the hidden meaning in his speech, but because she was what she was—a glorious pagan—the knowledge of the course which Gaston of the Beard contemplated aroused in her neither apprehension nor grief. To Tamea the mystery of death was no greater than the mystery of birth. Men and women lived their appointed time and passed on to Paliuli, if they were worthy like her father; or to Po, the world of darkness, if they were unworthy. The departure for Paliuli was not one to cause a grief greater than that experienced when one's nearest and dearest departed for a neighboring island, to be absent for an indefinite period. Of course she would weep, for were not her people the most affectionate and tender-hearted race in the world?

And was not she, the last of her line, a descendant of kings and expected to meet with complacency whatever of good or of evil life might have in store for her? So she tugged the great bush of a beard affectionately, from time to time, as her father talked, telling her of his plans for her, his ambitions and desires, impressing upon her, above all things, the necessity for absolute obedience to the man whom he would name her guardian.

With a full heart Tamea gave him the promise he desired, and when she noticed how much the assurance comforted him her triumphant youth routed for the nonce consideration of everything save the necessity for cheering her father. So she went to her stateroom and returned with—an accordion! It was a splendid instrument belonging to old Larrieau, and Tamea had learned to play it very well by ear. She lay back in her chair and commenced to play very, very softly a ballad that was old a decade before Tamea was born, to wit, "Down Went McGinty!"

But—it had a lilt to it, and presently her father was beating time and humming the song. And Tamea, like her father, like so many of her mother's race, had a gift for clowning; now, as she played, she swayed her body a trifle, raised her shoulders on the long drawn out "D-o-w-n" and made funny faces; somehow the instrument seemed to wail and sob as McGinty sank to the bottom of the sea. It was ridiculous, wholly amusing, and old Gaston's mellow bellow of laughter reached the ears of Dan Pritchard while yet his launch was a cable's length from the Moorea. And then Tamea swung her instrument and broke into "La Marseillaise" while her father sang it as only a Frenchman can.

Dan Pritchard came overside and stuck his head down through the ventilator over the deck-house.

"Gaston," he remarked, when the singer ceased, "I came because I heard you were very ill."

"Ill, *mon petit*, ill? I am worse than ill. I am a dead man and I sing at my own wake. Come down, rascal! By my beard, my old heart sings to see you, Dan Pritchard. Come down, I tell you."

"Coming," Dan answered laughingly—and came.

"I could embrace you, my boy," the old sailor informed him, "but during Lent one must do something to mortify the flesh. Besides, I have had the devilish luck to acquire leprosy."

Dan Pritchard made no sign that this news was disturbing, albeit he was hearing it for the first time.

"Well, if I may not shake your hand, give me a tug at your beard, Gaston. Upon my word, there is no blight on those whiskers, old shipmate." And before Larrieau could prevent him he had grasped a handful of whiskers and given the huge head a vigorous shaking. The Triton, tremendously pleased, roared out an oath to hide a sob.

"Dan, this is my well beloved daughter, Tamea. Tamea, my dear child, this is Monsieur Dan Pritchard, the gentleman of whom we were speaking."

Tamea's wondrous smoky eyes glowed with a welcoming light. "He who twitches my father's beard—when he *knows*," she said very distinctly, "shall never lack the love and respect of my father's daughter. Monsieur Dan Pritchard, my father would he might

embrace you. Behold! I embrace you—once for old Gaston of the Beard and once for myself." And she set her accordion on the cabin table, walked calmly to Dan Pritchard, drew him to her heart and kissed him, in friendly fashion, on each cheek.

Embarrassed, Dan took her hand in his and patted it. "You are a sweet child," he said simply. Then, turning to the old man: "Gaston, it's great to see you again. But explain yourself, wretch. How dare you foul up the Moorea with your frightful indisposition?"

"I was ever a disciple of the devil, Dan. It's all through the islands. The Chinese brought it. Dan, I am to be taken from Tamea—forever—and I go as soon as my business has been arranged. Here is the book containing my accounts as master to date. There is a balance of four thousand eight hundred and nine dollars and eight cents due me. Give this to Tamea for her personal needs. The vouchers are in this envelope. What is a fair price for my one-quarter interest in the Moorea?"

"She is an old vessel but sound, and she pays her way like a lady, Gaston. She's worth twenty-five thousand dollars. I will buy your interest on that basis."

"Sold. Invest the money for Tamea. Here are drafts on the Bank of California for one hundred and eighty thousand dollars. I have indorsed them to you. Buy bonds with them for Tamea. And here"—he bur-

rowed in the base of his beard and brought forth a small tobacco bag he had hidden in that hirsute forest —"are the crown jewels of my little Tamea. They are the black pearls I have come by, from time to time. It was known that I had some of great value and I have had to conceal them carefully." He laughed his bellowing laugh. "Pay the duty on them, Dan, if you are more honest than I; then sell them and buy more bonds for Tamea."

Dan Pritchard took an old envelope from his pocket, Larrieau dropped the bag into it, and Dan sealed the envelope.

"I desire that Tamea be educated and affianced to some decent fellow. Tamea, hear your father. You are not to marry any man Monsieur Dan Pritchard does not approve of."

Dan looked at her. "I promise," she replied simply.

"You are to be her guardian, Dan."

"Very well, Gaston," said Dan instantly, "since you desire it. I shall try to discharge the office in a commendable manner."

"That, my boy, is why the office is yours. For your trouble you shall have my gratitude while I live and the gratitude of Tamea after I am dead. Also, you shall be the executor of my estate, which will bring you a nice fee, and in addition the largest and most beautiful pearl in that lot is yours. It will make a

magnificent setting for a ring for the woman you may marry—if you have not married."

"I still revel in single blessedness, Gaston."

The sailor nodded approvingly. "Time enough to settle down after you are forty," he agreed. "You will select the pearl, however. It is yours now. It is magnificent. Its equal is not to be found in the world, I do believe. The heart of it has a warm glow, like my old heart when I think of my friendship for your good father and for you—when I think of Tamea and Tamea's wonderful mother. Damnation! I have lived! I have known love; my great carcass has quivered to the thrill of life as a schooner quivers in the grip of a *willi-waw!*" He smiled wistfully at Dan. Then: "Well, bring down your lawyer, Dan. I would make my will, leaving all I possess to Tamea."

At a summons from Dan, Henderson came down into the cabin and was introduced to Gaston of the Beard and his daughter. The last will and testament of the Triton was as simple as the man who signed it, and Dan and the lawyer appended their signatures as witnesses.

"Now then, Gaston," said Dan, "of what does your estate consist?"

"These pearls, the money due me for disbursements made for account of the Moorea and her owners, my interest in the Moorea and these drafts on San Fran-

cisco. I have no real estate, and I owe nobody. Neither does anybody owe me."

"Then," said Dan smilingly, "why make a will, with its fees and taxes? Why not make a gift of all you possess to Tamea now? Gifts are not taxable, nor do they have to be probated—expensively."

Gaston of the Beard smiled and winked at the lawyer. "I knew I should make no mistake in entrusting my little Tamea to this good friend," he declared. "Dan, the drafts are already indorsed to her. Take them. The pearls you already have. Go ashore, my good friend, and return with a bill of sale and a check for my interest in the Moorea, which I sell to you, and your firm's check for the amount due me on the final adjustment of the ship's accounts. I will then indorse both checks to Tamea and the troublesome business of dying will have been simplified a thousandfold."

Dan returned to the office of Casson and Pritchard, found a printed bill of sale form such as is used in shipping offices, filled it in, unlocked the safe, drew Casson and Pritchard's check and his own for the amount due Larrieau and returned to the Moorea. Three scratches of a pen and Dan's word passed, and the estate of Gaston of the Beard had been probated and distributed.

Meanwhile Tamea had opened the boxes of flowers Dan had brought aboard in compliance with her

father's request. Deftly she wove a *lei* of sweet peas, and when the business with Dan and the lawyer was done she hung the *lei* around old Gaston's burly neck and garlanded his shaggy head with roses.

Presently, at his suggestion, Tamea called the steward, who brought glasses and a dusty bottle of old French Malaga. When the glasses had been filled and passed by Tamea, Gaston of the Beard raised his on high.

"I drink to my loves, living and dead; to you, friend Dan Pritchard, and to you, Monsieur l'Avocat! *Morituri te salutamus!* I wish you good luck, good health, happiness and a life just long enough not to become a burden. May you live as joyously as I have lived and love life as I have loved it: may you die as contented as I shall die, and without repining. And may we embrace, like true friends and clean, in Paliuli!"

They drank.

"I have six quarts of that Malaga left. It is very old and of a rare vintage. Monsieur l'Avocat, will you have money for your fee or would you prefer the six live soldiers? . . . Ah, I thought so! The steward will deliver them to you at your home, provided the prohibition agents are not encountered first. Let us go on deck."

At the head of the companion Tamea kissed a rose and passed it to her father.

And that was their farewell.

"The tide has turned. It is at the ebb. It will bear me far to the sea that I have loved and upon whose bosom my days have been spent," said Gaston of the Beard casually. "Thank you, dear Dan, for all that you have been to me in life, for all that you will be to me in death. I go, finding it hurts to leave those I love. Farewell, Dan Pritchard, and you also, my good Monsieur l'Avocat . . . Tamea, dear child, I depart, loving you."

He pressed to his red lips the rose she had given him and then, with a look of unutterable love for Tamea and a blithe kiss tossed to sea and sky, he ran swiftly to the rail, stepped over it, and disappeared with a very small splash for so huge a man. . . .

"He has gone to join my mother in Paliuli," said Tamea bravely. "He goes to her, flower-laden, like a bridegroom. It is the custom in Riva with those for whom life has lost its taste to have their loved ones adorn them with flowers; then they walk out into the sea until they are seen no more."

Presently, to Dan Pritchard, watching over the taff-rail of the Moorea, something floated up from the dark depths and drifted astern. It was the emblem of love, the crown of roses and the *lei* with which Tamea had decked the great pagan e'er he left her for Paliuli. . . . Afterward Dan remembered that Gaston had worn his marvelous going-ashore clothes and that

his tremendous trousers had bagged somewhat more than usual. So Dan suspected he had taken the precaution to fill his pockets with pig lead or iron bolts, and with the tide at the ebb he was drifting in those dark depths out through the Golden Gate at the rate of four miles an hour. . . . Well, they would not see *him* again.

The sun had sunk behind Telegraph Hill, and dusk was creeping over the waters of the bay of St. Francis. Dan saw the flag at Fort Mason come fluttering down, and across the waters came the sound of the garrison band; from the church of St. Francis de Sales over in North Beach the Angelus was ringing.

"Well, Mr. Henderson," said Dan presently, "the day's work is done. The launch is still alongside, so I suggest that you go ashore first and send the launch back for me. Your family doubtless expects you home to dinner. I shall remain here, I think, and go ashore later, when Tamea has packed her belongings. I don't suppose I ought to leave the child here all night alone."

Mr. Henderson inclined his head, for he was profoundly affected; as the launch coughed away in the gathering gloom to land him at Meiggs Wharf, Dan descended to the cabin, whither Tamea had gone.

As he entered the main cabin she came out of her stateroom. Her glorious black hair had been loosely braided and hung over her left breast; in the braid a scarlet sweet pea-blossom nestled. She still wore the

cheap white cotton skirt Dan had observed on her when he first came aboard and she was still hatless, but buttoned tightly around her lithe young body she now wore an old navy pea-jacket; under her arm she carried her father's very expensive accordion.

"I am your Tamea now, Monsieur Dan Pritchard," she announced tremulously. "In this new land I know no one but you. I go with you where you will. I will obey you always, for you are my father and my mother."

The pathos of that simple speech stabbed him. Poor, lonely little alien! Poor wanderer, in a white man's world—a world which, Dan sensed, she would never quite understand. How wondrously simple and sweet and unspoiled she was! How transcendently lovely! He wished he might paint her thus—he had a yearning to stretch forth his hand and touch her hair . . . and presently he yielded to this desire. At his gentle, paternal touch all the stark, suppressed agony in the heart of the Queen of Riva rose in her throat and choked her. . . .

Dan Pritchard took the outcast in his arms and soothed and petted her while she emptied her full heart. And to him the experience did not seem an unusual one, for as Maisie had often assured him he had been born to bear the burdens of other people. He was one of those great-hearted men who seem destined to daddy the world. . . .

He wiped her tears away with his handkerchief and when the launch bumped alongside again they said good-by to the Moorea. Kahanaha, the Kanaka, wept, for he had sailed ten years with Gaston of the Beard. As they disappeared into the darkness headed for Meiggs Wharf, his mellow baritone voice followed them.

He was singing "*Aloha!*"

CHAPTER IV

THROUGHOUT the ten minute journey from the Moorea to Meiggs Wharf, Tamea sat beside Dan Pritchard in the stern sheets of the launch, holding his hand tightly and, in silence, gazing ahead toward the lights of the city. She seemed afraid to let go his hand, nor did she relinquish it when they paused beside Dan's limousine, waiting for them at the head of the dock. Graves, his chauffeur, with the license of an old and favored employe, was sound asleep inside the car when Dan opened the door and prodded him; at sight of his employer standing hand in hand with Tamea, Graves's eyes fairly popped with excitement and interest.

Tamea's lashes still held a few recalcitrant tears and she looked very childish and forlorn. Dan was carrying her accordion, and observing this, Graves instantly concluded that his master had casually attached himself to some wandering gipsy troubadour. He stared and pursed his lips in a soundless whistle; his eyebrows went up perceptibly.

Tamea's moist eyes blazed. Rage superseded her grief.

"Monsieur Dan Pritchard," she demanded, "is this man your servant?"

Dan nodded.

"If we were in Riva I should have him beaten with my father's razor belt to teach him humility."

Dan reflected, sadly humorous, that it would be like Gaston of the Beard to utilize a razor strop for any purpose save the one for which it had been intended. But the girl's complaint annoyed him.

"Oh, don't bother about Graves!" he urged. "He isn't awake yet. He thinks he's seeing things at night."

"The man stares at me," Tamea complained. "He is saying to himself: 'What right has this girl with my master?' I know. Yes, you bet."

"Graves," said Dan wearily, "you are, I fear, permitting yourself a liberty. Wake up, get out of here and in behind the wheel. And by the way, Graves, hereafter you will be subject to the orders of Miss Larrieau. In her own country Miss Larrieau is a queen and accustomed to the most perfect service from everybody with whom she comes in contact. I expect, therefore, that you will remember your manners. Driving for a bachelor is very apt, I quite realize, to make any chauffeur careless, but from now on, Graves, whenever Queen Tamea of Riva craves snappy service, see that she gets it. I should regret very much the necessity for flaying you with a razor strop."

"Lay forward, you," Tamea commanded. "What

business have you aft? Your place is in the fo'castle, not the cabin."

Fortunately, Graves was blessed with a sufficient sense of humor to respond humbly: "Beg pardon, Your Majesty. I didn't mean to get fresh. As the boss says, wakin' me up sudden like that scared me sorter."

He carefully drew the curtains in the rear, on both sides and in front, for, notwithstanding his cavalier manner in the presence of royalty, Graves was more than passing fond of his employer and desired to spare the latter the humiliation of being seen with a lady of uncertain lineage and doubtful social standing riding in public with him in his limousine. Graves was fully convinced that his master suddenly had gone insane, and as a result it behooved him now, more than ever before, to render faultless service. He wondered where the Queen was taking the boss or where the boss was taking the Queen; already he was resolved to drive them through streets rarely frequented by the people who dwelt in Dan Pritchard's world.

Tamea's haughty voice disturbed his benevolent thoughts.

"Are you ashamed to ride with me, Dan Pritchard?"

"Certainly not, my dear girl. Graves, how dare you draw those curtains without permission? I'll skin you alive for this!"

"Beg pardon, sir," mumbled the bewildered Graves.

He raised the curtains, vacated the car immediately and stood at a stiff salute while Dan handed Tamea into the luxurious interior. As he followed her in he turned to Graves and growled, "Scoundrel! You shall pay dearly for this." A lightning wink took the sting out of his words, however, and caused Graves to bow his head in simulated humiliation; nevertheless the faithful fellow could not forbear one final effort. Just before he closed the door upon them he switched off the dome light. As he did so he saw Tamea's hand slip into Dan Pritchard's.

"All I ask," Graves murmured a moment later to the oil gage, "is that Miss Morrison don't get her lamps on them two. She don't seem to have no success gettin' him to fall for her, but along comes this Portugee or gipsy or somethin' with an accordion on her arm, and the jig is up. She's dressed like a North Beach wop woman that's married a fisherman, but she tells him she's a queen and wants to step out with him in his automobile. Right away he falls for her. Bing! Bang! And they're off in a cloud of dust. Ain't it the truth? When these quiet birds do step out they go some!"

There was a buzzing close to his left ear.

"Sailing directions," murmured Graves and inclined his ear toward the annunciator.

"Home, Graves!" said the voice of Daniel Pritchard.

Graves quivered as if mortally stung, but out of the

chaos of his emotions the habit of years asserted itself. He nodded to indicate that he had received his orders and understood them, and the car rolled away down the Embarcadero.

"Now," murmured the hapless Graves, addressing the speedometer, "I *know* he's crazy! Of course I can stand it, Sooey Wan won't give a hoot and Julia probably won't let on she's saw anything out of the way, but Mrs. Pippy'll give notice p. d. q. and quit quicker'n that. . . . Well, I should worry and grow a lot of gray hairs."

He tooled the car carefully through rough cobbled streets which ordinarily he would have avoided, and by a circuitous route reached Dan Pritchard's house in Pacific Avenue. "I'll be shot if I'll pull up in front to unload them," he resolved, and darted in the automobile driveway, nor paused until the car was in the garage! As he reached for the hand brake the annunciator buzzed again; again Graves inclined a rebellious ear.

"While appreciating tremendously the sentiments that actuate you, Graves," came Dan Pritchard's calm voice, "the fact is that my garage is scarcely a fitting place in which to unload a lady. Back out into the street and so maneuver the car that we will be enabled to alight at the curb in front of the house."

Again the habit of years conquered. Graves nodded. But to the button on the motor horn he said dazedly:

"He's got the gall of a burglar! Here I go out of my way to help him and he throws a monkey wrench into the machinery. Very well, boss! If you can stand it I guess I can. I ain't got no proud flesh!"

With a sinking heart he obeyed and stood beside the car watching Dan Pritchard steer Tamea up the steps; saw the incomprehensible man open the street door with his latchkey; saw him propel Tamea gently through the portal and follow; saw the door close on the incipient scandal!

Then he looked carefully up and down the street and satisfied himself that he had been the only witness to the amazing incident; whereupon he put the car up and hastened into the servants' dining room to ascertain what, if any, impression had been created upon Mrs. Pippy, the housekeeper, Julia, the maid, and Sooey Wan, the Chinese cook, who, with Graves, constituted the Pritchard *ménage*.

As Graves took his seat at the servants' table and gazed inquisitively through the door into the kitchen where Sooey Wan, squatted on his heels, was glowering at something in the oven, Pritchard entered the kitchen. Sooey Wan looked up at him but did not deem it necessary to stand up.

"Boss," he demanded, "wha' for you allee time come home late for dinner?"

"I don't come home late for dinner all the time. Con-

found your Oriental hide, Sooey Wan, are you never going to quit complaining?"

The imperturbable Sooey Wan glanced at the alarm clock on an adjacent shelf.

"You klazy, boss," he retorted. "You fi', ten, fi'teen, twenty-fi' minutes late. Dinner all spoil, ever'thing go lotten boss don' come home on time."

"Go to thunder, you old raven! Quit your croaking," Dan admonished the heathen.

Sooey Wan flew—or rather pretended to fly—into a rage. "Helluva note," he cried, and shied a butcher knife into the sink. "Twenty year I cook for you papa. but he never late. Papa allee time in heap hurry. Son, allee time go slow, takum easy. Well, you likee lotten dinner I ketchum, boss. You likee A-numba-one dinner no can do—gee, Missa Dan, wha's mallah? You no look happy."

"I'm a bit distressed tonight, Sooey Wan."

Sooey Wan stood up and laid a hand on Dan's shoulder. "You tell Sooey Wan," he urged, and in his faded old eyes, in his manner and in the intonation of his voice, no longer shrill with pretended rage, there was evidenced the tremendous affection which the old San Francisco Chinese servant class always accords to a kindly and generous employer and particularly to that employer's children.

"A good friend has died, Sooey Wan."

"That's hell," said Sooey Wan sympathetically. "Me know him, boss?"

"Yes, he was a friend of yours, too, Sooey. Captain Larrieau, the Frenchman with the big beard."

"Sure, I remember him. When he come Sooey Wan have sole for dinner. He teachee me how makum sauce Margie Lee."

"Yes, poor Gaston was very fond of tenderloin of sole with sauce Margery, as it is made in Marseilles. Well, he's dead, Sooey Wan, and tonight I brought his daughter home with me. I am her guardian."

"Allee same papa, eh?"

Dan nodded, and Sooey Wan thoughtfully rubbed his chin. "All li', Missa Dan," he replied. "I have A-numba-one dinner! Too bad captain die. Him one really nice man—him likee Missa Dan velly much. Too bad!"

He patted his employer on the shoulder in a manner that meant volumes.

"The lady has to dress, Sooey Wan, so we cannot have dinner for half an hour yet."

"You leavee dinner to Sooey Wan," the old Chinaman assured him. "Missa Dan, you likee cocktail now?"

"Never mind, thank you."

"Sure, boss, you likee cocktail now. You no taikee Sooey Wan. Sooey Wan fixee nice Gibson cocktail. My boy ketchum cold heart, Sooey Wan makum heart

warm again. . . . Shut up, shut up! Boss, you allee time talkee too damn much."

Realizing the uselessness of protest, Dan stood by while Sooey Wan manufactured the heart-warmer. And when the drink was ready the old Chinaman produced two glasses and filled one for himself. "I dlink good luck to spirit Captain Larrieau. Hoping devil no catchum," he said. "Tonight me go joss-house and burn devil paper."

He set down his empty glass and with paternal gentleness thrust Dan out of the kitchen; as the door swung to behind the latter, Sooey Wan began audibly to discharge a cargo of oaths, both Chinese and English. This appeared to relieve his feelings considerably, for presently he commenced to sing softly, which emboldened Graves to address him.

"Say, Sooey," he suggested, "I wouldn't mind bein' wrapped around one of those cocktails of the boss's myself."

Sooey Wan looked at him—once. Once was sufficient. Ah, these new servants—these fresh American boys! How little did they know their place! What a febrile conception of their duty toward the author of the payroll was theirs!

"Bum!" hissed Sooey Wan. "Big Amelican bum!" Seizing the poker he commenced stirring the fire vigorously, from time to time favoring Graves with a tigerish glance which said all too plainly, "I stir the

fire with this, but if I hear any more of your impudence I'll knock your brains out with it."

Graves subsided. He knew who was the head of that house!

CHAPTER V

FROM the moment that he and Tamea left the schooner Dan's thoughts had been occupied with the weightiest problem that had ever been presented to him for solution. What was he to do with Tamea and where was he to take her? For a while he was comforted by the thought that he could not possibly do better than bring her to Maisie Morrison, explain the circumstances and ask Maisie to take the orphan in for the night, lend her some clothing and tell her a few things about life in a civilized community which it was apparent she should know at the earliest opportunity. Then he reflected that Maisie might not be at all obliged to him for thrusting such a task upon her; clearly it was none of her business what happened to this half-caste Polynesian girl. Always practical, Maisie would, doubtless, suggest that the girl be taken to a hotel; even if she did not suggest it, that pompous old ass, Casson, would.

Dan remembered that Gaston of the Beard had never liked Casson and that Casson had never liked Gaston of the Beard. Nothing save Gaston's record for efficiency and shrewd trading, plus Dan's influence, had

conduced to keep the pagan in the employ of Casson and Pritchard.

So Dan resigned that plan, but not before he had broached it to Tamea.

"Who is the woman, Maisie?" Tamea queried without interest.

Dan informed her.

"I do not like her," Tamea decided. "I will not go to the home of a woman I do not know."

It was then that Dan considered the plan of taking the girl to a hotel. But the prospect horrified him. He could not abandon her to her own resources in a metropolitan hotel. He had no definite idea how far Riva had progressed in civilization, but he assumed it was still, to all intents and purposes, in the Neolithic Age, and consequently Tamea would find plumbing, hot and cold water, electric lights, telephones, strange maids and perky little bellhops much too much to assimilate alone on this, her first night in her new environment. Moreover, Dan shrank from the task of entering the Palace or the St. Francis hotels with Tamea, registering her as Queen Tamea of Riva, and having the room clerk, for the sake of publicity for the hotel, give the ever watchful hotel reporters a tip on an interesting story of a foreign potentate, clothed in white cotton and a pea-jacket, who had just arrived tearful and bareheaded, with no baggage other

than a huge accordion, and accompanied by a wealthy shipping man.

Decidedly he could not risk that. He must avoid publicity. Remained, therefore, no alternative save taking her to his own home, in San Francisco's most exclusive residence section on Pacific Heights.

Thank God, he had in his employ as housekeeper a prim and proper person, a Mrs. Pippy. In her fiftieth year Mrs. Pippy's husband, a bank cashier, had absconded to parts unknown with a lady somewhat younger and handsomer than Mrs. Pippy, who thereupon had been forced to earn her living in almost the only way possible for a woman of her advanced age. Knowing her to be a woman of taste, culture and refinement, Maisie had induced Dan to engage her as his housekeeper, which he was very loath to do, owing to serious objection on the part of Sooey Wan. Maisie had run this oriental tyrant quickly to earth, however. Sooey Wan could cook a dinner, but he couldn't order one and he couldn't see that it was served properly; wherefore, since Dan liked to entertain his friends at dinner very frequently, Mrs. Pippy could be depended upon to manage his household affairs efficiently and delightfully.

At Maisie's suggestion, Mrs. Pippy had engaged as waitress and housemaid an exile from Erin who answered to the name of Julia. Julia was an amiable creature who daily entrusted Sooey Wan with the sum

of twenty-five cents to be bet for her in a Chinese lottery in Washington Alley. Dan remembered now that Julia was about the same size as Tamea, and only the Sunday afternoon previous he had seen Julia leaving the house clad in a tailored suit that gave her what Graves termed a "snappy" look.

"I'll buy that suit from Julia and pay her a fine price for it," Dan soliloquized. "Tamea has just naturally got to have something decent to wear downtown when the horrible job of shopping begins. And I wouldn't be at all surprised if Julia could sell me a pair of shoes, some stockings and a shirtwaist, and do Tamea's hair up in an orderly manner. Mrs. Pippy will take her in hand and do the needful. If she doesn't," he added fiercely, "I'll dismiss her immediately."

Fortunately, Tamea's mournful thoughts claimed her attention; she was content to sit perfectly quiet and hold Dan's hand, as if from the contact she drew strength to face the unknown. When Dan broached the subject of turning her over to Maisie she had been distinctly alarmed, and when he sang Maisie's praises so generously, she decided that he was very fond of Maisie, and, for a reason which she did not consider necessary to analyze, Tamea made up her mind instantly that she was not going to like Maisie; which decision, in view of the fact that she had never seen Maisie, must be regarded as only another example of the extraordinary instinct or intuition of the fem-

inine sex, wheresoever situated and with regard to age, color, creed, or previous condition of servitude.

She was relieved when Dan abandoned the subject without comment or urging; she had a hazy impression that he had been rather nice about it and that her father had selected, to take his place, a singularly kindly and comfortable person, indeed. She gave his hand a little squeeze, which he didn't even notice.

Mrs. Pippy was just ascending the stairs from the entrance hall when Dan let Tamea and himself into the house. The good lady paused in her ascent with much the same abruptness which, we imagine, characterized the termination of the flight of Lot's wife when that lady was metamorphosed into a pillar of salt.

"Good heavens, Mr. Pritchard!" she exclaimed—and assumed a regal attitude.

"Good evening, Mrs. Pippy," Dan saluted her cheerfully. "May I have your attendance here for a moment, dear Mrs. Pippy? . . . Thank you so much. Mrs. Pippy, this young lady is Miss Tamea Larrieau, and in her own land, which is the island of Riva, in eastern Polynesia, she is quite the most important person of her sex. In fact, Miss Tamea is the hereditary ruler of the Rivas, or Rivets, or whatever one might term them. Tamea, this lady is Mrs. Pippy, who is kind enough to manage my household

Mrs. Pippy is a kind lady who will take good care of you, won't you, Mrs. Pippy?"

Mrs. Pippy favored Tamea with a wintry nod and an equally wintry and fleeting smile. She still stood on the stairs in her regal attitude; apparently, in the presence of royalty, she was not impressed.

Immediately Tamea gave her guardian additional evidence of an alert mentality and extreme sensitiveness to the slightest atmosphere of disapproval or hostility. She favored Mrs. Pippy with a long, cool, impersonal glance, before she turned to Dan and said, naïvely:

"She looks like Columbia, the gem of the ocean!"

Decidedly, Dan Pritchard was not in humorous mood; nevertheless he burbled and churned inwardly for several seconds before conquering an impulse to burst into maniac laughter. He realized in time, fortunately, that he could not possibly afford to laugh at his housekeeper. The good soul was arrayed in a black crêpe de Chine gown, trimmed with lace—a voluminous and extremely frippery garment; standing there, her cold countenance handsome with a classic handsomeness beneath a pile of silvery hair, she did indeed offer a splendid comparison with the popular conception of Columbia.

"Pardon me, Mr. Pritchard," said Mrs. Pippy frigidly, "did I understand you to say that Miss Larrieau comes from eastern Polynesia?"

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Pippy. She arrived from there today."

"For a moment I was inclined to think you had been misinformed and that the young lady hails from the region known as 'south of Market Street.' "

"That one went over Tamea's head," Dan thought. "It was meant for me. Well, it landed."

He smiled upon his housekeeper.

"We will, if you please, Mrs. Pippy, call that round a draw. Miss Larrieau is my ward. I acquired her about two hours ago and it is my firm intention to do as well by her as possible. To that end I crave your indulgence and hearty coöperation, Mrs. Pippy."

The housekeeper thawed perceptibly. "I shall be most happy to aid you in making Miss Larrieau as comfortable and happy as possible."

"That's perfectly splendid of you, Mrs. Pippy. Tamea, my dear, will you step into the living room and play your accordion, or do something to amuse yourself, while Mrs. Pippy and I hold a conference?"

"You will not go away—far?" Tamea pleaded.

"This is my house, Tamea, and it is your home for the present at least. You are very welcome. Whenever your dear father came to San Francisco it was his pleasure to visit me here, to dine with me and sit up half the night talking with me. He always felt that this was his San Francisco home, and you must feel likewise."

"Very well," Tamea replied and entered the room. A wood fire was crackling in the large fireplace, and Tamea sat down on her heels before this fire and held her hands out to the cheerful flames.

"This is a cold country," she complained. "Cold winds and cold hearts."

Dan rejoined Mrs. Pippy and drew her into the dining room, where, in brief sentences, he explained Tamea and his hopes and desires concerning her. Mrs. Pippy gave a respectful ear to his recital; that was all.

"I have a feeling, Mr. Pritchard, that you are going to have your hands full with that young woman," she declared. "I have always heard that half-castes of any kind partake of the worst characteristics of both parents. Eurasians are—well, scarcely desirable."

"Tamea is not a Eurasian. She is a pure bred Caucasian, but in many respects she is a child of nature. It is evident that her father saw to it that she received all the educational advantages possible in her little world, but I must impress upon you, Mrs. Pippy, that when dealing with her you are not dealing with a modern girl. Her outlook on life, her thoughts, impulses—and, I dare say, her moral viewpoint—antedate the Christian era."

"Is she a—Christian, Mr. Pritchard?"

"I think not. Her father was not. Neither was he

an atheist. He was a pagan. I wouldn't be at all surprised if Tamea's religious beliefs, if she has any, are idolatrous."

"Horrible!"

Dan smiled. "I dare say Tamea is quite as happy as any Christian, Mrs. Pippy."

"I do hope she's clean, Mr. Pritchard."

"Well, her people usually are. However, you might explain to her the mysteries of a modern bathtub. Do you think you and Julia can manage to dress her for dinner—after a fashion?"

Mrs. Pippy expressed the hope that the experiment might prove successful and suggested that Julia be interviewed.

Julia, a romantic, rosy-cheeked, imaginative but extremely plain woman in the early thirties, was overwhelmed with importance to discover that the master of the house had elected to lean upon her, to seek her advice and coöperation when confronted by this most unusual dilemma.

"An' is it lady-in-waitin' to a queen you'd ask me to be, Misther Pritchard? Faith, then, an' I'll defy you to find a body more willin'. Of course we'll take care of her. Why shouldn't we? Sure, 'tis sympathy an' undhershtandin' she'll need this night. Where's the poor lamb?"

For some reason not quite apparent to him, Dan had a feeling that Julia Hagerty was, beyond a doubt,

the most wonderful woman he had ever met. Mrs. Pippy, he thought, had been overeducated and civilized and sheltered to the point where all the humanity had been squeezed out of her, while Julia, child of the soil, had, in the daily battle for bread and butter, been humanized to the point where she and Tamea could meet on something akin to common ground.

At that moment Tamea, having warmed her fingers and stretched herself flat on her back on the thick oriental rug, took up her accordion and commenced improvising a melody that had in it that wailing quality, that funereal suggestion inseparable from the music of a dying race, or an oppressed.

As she played Tamea sang, in a sweet little voice that scarcely filled the room, a semi-chant that Dan Pritchard suspected was also an improvisation, with words and music dedicated to the one who was still drifting outward with the tide.

Mrs. Pippy's ultra-superior countenance commenced to soften and Julia stood listening open-mouthed.

"The poor darlin'," murmured Julia.

Suddenly Tamea ceased her improvisation, shifted a few octaves and played "One Sweetly Solemn Thought." In the twilight of the big living room it seemed that an organ was softly playing.

"She's a Christian!" Mrs. Pippy whispered dramatically.

"I hope not," Dan replied. "I think I prefer her pagan innocence."

"But how strange that, with her father not yet cold in his—ah—watery grave, she should elect to sing and play whatever it is she plays."

"Well, if one be tied to tradition and humbug and false standards and cowardice, I suppose Tamea's conduct *is* strange," Dan admitted. "I think, however, that I can understand it. Certainly I appreciate it. What if the girl was passionately devoted to her father? What if he did commit suicide in her presence two hours ago? They had talked it over beforehand, sanely, and both had agreed that it was the best and simplest way out. And Gaston wasn't messy about it. To me his passing was as magnificent as that of the doomed Viking of old who put out to sea in his burning galley. Smiling, composed, he stepped blithely over the ship's rail.

"Just one step from life to death, you say? No, not to death, but to another life! We Christians who believe in the resurrection of the dead and the communion of saints are horribly afraid of death, but the pagan has nothing to regret and journeys over the Styx in a spirit of adventure and altruism. Tamea will, from time to time, weep because she will miss her father's comradeship and affection, but never because her father has parted with life, for to her and her people life without joy is worse than death.

"They make no mystery of death; it is not an occasion or a tremendous event save when a monarch passes. No mourning clothes or mourning period to bolster up a pretense of an affection for the deceased stronger than that which actually existed; no tolling of bells, no sonorous ritual. That is the hokum of our civilization. But tradition, mummery and religion are unknown to Tamea. She is simple, sane and philosophical, and whatever you do, Mrs. Pippy, and you, Julia, don't pretend that anything unusual has happened. Do not proffer her sympathy. What she craves is affection and understanding."

"You are already late to dinner, Mr. Pritchard. Sooey Wan is on the warpath," Mrs. Pippy suggested. She was not in sympathy with Mr. Pritchard's views and desired to change the subject.

"Some day I'm going to do something to Sooey Wan. I grow weary of his tyranny. Julia, come with me and I'll introduce you to Her Majesty."

Tamea turned her head as they entered the room but did not trouble to rise. Dan noticed that her eyes were bright with unshed tears, that her lips quivered pitifully, that the brave little smile of welcome she summoned for him was very wistful.

"Tamea, this is Julia, who will take good care of you."

The Queen of Riva sat up and looked Julia over. Julia, fully alive to the tremendous drama of the situ-

ation, had wreathed her plain features in a smile that was almost a friendly leer; her Irish blue eyes glittered with curiosity and amiability.

"Hello, Tammy, darlin'," she crooned. "Come here to me, you poor gir'rl, till I take care o' you. Glory be to the Heavenly Father, did you ever see the like o' that shmile? An' thim eyes, Mrs. Pippy! An' her hair that long she's sittin' on it! Wirra, will you look at her complexion! Like ripe shtrawberries smothered in cream."

Julia held out her arms. Tamea stared at her for several seconds, then carefully laid aside her accordion and stood up.

"She is a plain woman, but her heart is one of gold," she said to Dan, and went to Julia and was gathered into her arms.

Poor Julia! Like Tamea, she too was an exile, far from a land she loved and the loving of which, with her kind, amounts to a religious duty. Julia was a servant, a plain, uneducated woman, but at birth God had given her the treasure for which Solomon, in his mature years, had prayed. She had an understanding heart, and to it now she pressed the lonely Tamea, the while she stroked the girl's wondrous, rippling, jet-black tresses.

"Poor darlin'," she crooned. "You poor orphant, you."

"I will kiss you," Tamea declared, and did it. She

looked over her shoulder at Dan Pritchard. "And you will give me this woman all for myself?" she queried.

"Yes, my dear," he answered brazenly. "Julia belongs to you. Did she not give herself to you? Why should I withhold my permission? Julia is your slave."

She learned her gratitude. "Give me, please, one of my father's black pearls—any one you do not want for yourself."

Instantly Dan took from his pocket the envelope Gaston of the Beard had entrusted to him for Tamea, and spread the pearls on his open palm. Tamea selected one that was worth ten thousand dollars if it was worth a penny, and handed it to Julia.

"Observe, Julia," she said, "the warm bright glow in the heart of the pearl. It is like the warm bright glow in the heart of you, my Julia. Take it. Thus I reward those who love me—thus and thus," and she kissed Julia's sweet cheeks.

Julia eyed her employer with amazement and wonder. "Glory be, Mather Pritchard," she gasped, "what'll I do with it?"

"Put it away in a safe deposit box, Julia," he suggested. "It is worth a small fortune. And remember what I told you. Nothing that may happen must be unusual. Understand. Now take Tamea upstairs and dress her while I call on Sooey Wan and set dinner back half an hour."

CHAPTER VI

WITH a shower bath, a change of linen and the donning of dinner clothes, Dan always felt a freshening of the spirit—rather as if the grime of commercialism had been washed away. Whether he dined alone or with guests he always dressed for dinner.

Sooey Wan, who added to his duties as cook those of general superintendent of Dan's establishment, in defiance of the authority vested in Mrs. Pippy, and who was, on occasion, valet, counselor and friend, came up to his room with another cocktail just as Dan finished dressing. Also, he brought a cocktail for himself, and, while waiting for Dan to adjust his tie, the old Chinaman helped himself to one of Dan's gold-tipped cigarettes.

Ordinarily, Sooey Wan permitted himself few liberties with his boss, but upon occasions when his acute intuition told him that the boss was low in spirits, Sooey Wan always forgot that Dan was his boss. Then Dan became merely Sooey Wan's boy, the adored male baby of the first white man for whom Sooey Wan had ever worked. The years fell away and

Dan was just a ten-year-old, and he and Sooey Wan were making red dragon kites in the kitchen and planning to fly them the following Saturday from Twin Peaks.

Indeed, Pritchard, senior, had left to Sooey Wan a large share in the upbringing and character-building of his only son, for Dan's mother had died that Dan might live. It had been Sooey Wan who had imparted to Dan a respect for the inflexible code of the Chinese that a man shall honor his father and his mother and accord due reverence to the bones of his ancestors and the land that gave him birth. It had been Sooey Wan who, inveterate gambler himself, nevertheless taught Dan that when a man loses he shall take his losses smilingly and never neglect to pay his debts. Into Dan's small head he had instilled as much Chinese philosophy and as much Chinese honor as he would have instilled into a son of his own had his strange gods not denied him this supreme privilege.

Dan knew the old Chinaman for the treasure he was and nothing that Sooey Wan might do could possibly have offended him. In thirty-five years of perfect service to the Pritchards, father and son, Sooey Wan had bought and paid for the few liberties he took—an occasional cigarette in their presence and about six cocktails per annum.

What Sooey Wan realized his boss needed tonight was human society. Sooey Wan felt fully equal

to the task of supplying that rare commodity, and he was in Dan's room now for that purpose.

"My boy feelee little better, eh?" he suggested.

"Considerably. Life isn't half bad, Sooey Wan. The world isn't filled entirely with muckers."

"Oh, velly nice world!" Sooey Wan agreed. "To-day I ketchum ten spot in China lottery. I play fi' dollar. Tonight Sooey Wan feel pretty damn good, too."

A silence while Dan sat down, lighted a cigarette and sipped his cocktail. Then:

"Julia velly happy, boss. Captain's girl give Julia velly nice plesent. She come show me. Missie Pip velly sorry no can understand at first. No ketchum pearl." And Sooey Wan chuckled like a malevolent old gnome, while Dan laughed with him.

"Missie Pip too high-tone'," Sooey Wan decided. "Yeh, too muchee. No pay muchee Missie Pip for be high-tone'. Sooey Wan don't give a damn. Sooey Wan ketchum pearl, all li'. No ketchum pearl, all li'. Ketchum ten spot China lottery, velly good. Ketchum ten spot for Julia, too, but Julia no playum heavy. Twenty-fi' cen's, two bittee limit."

The Chinese lottery was then discussed, with Sooey Wan adverting with delightful regularity to the fact that Mrs. Pippy was in a mood to kick herself up hill and down dale because of her lamentable failure to recognize a queen. The gift of all the pearls ever col-

lected in the South Seas could not have afforded the old Chinese schemer one-half the delight this knowledge afforded him, and Dan quickly realized that for the pleasure of this social visit from Sooey Wan he was indebted quite as much to Mrs. Pippy's misfortune as he was to Sooey Wan's unfaltering affection. He *had* to share this joyous news with somebody who could appreciate it!

Presently Sooey Wan grew serious. "I lookee thlough dining room door when Captain's girl go upstair," he confided. "Velly pitty girl. Velly damn nice. Missa Dan, you mally lady queen?"

"No, confound you, no. What put that idea into your fool head?"

"Captain's girl velly nice. Bimeby, boss, you have fi', six, seven, maybe eight son! Sure, you have good luck. She give you many son."

"I don't want many sons. Just now I do not want any."

"You klazy. What you think Sooey Wan stick around for, anyhow. You no ketchum baby pretty quick wha' for I workee for you? Hey? Me ketchum plenty money. Me go China."

"You're an interfering, scheming old duffer, Sooey. Get back to your kitchen."

Sooey Wan departed in huge disgust, slamming the door. A moment later he opened it a couple of inches and looked in. "Lady queen leady for dinner. Look

velly nice. Missa Dan, you listen Sooey Wan. Captain's girl velly nice."

Dan threw a book at him and descended to dinner.

At the foot of the stairs he met Tamea, attended by Mrs. Pippy and Julia. Mrs. Pippy was a being reincarnated. She beamed, she seemed fairly to drip with the milk of human kindness. The simple Julia stood, grinning like a gargoyle, head on one side and hands clasped under her chin, presenting a picture of pride personified.

"Look at her now, Misther Pritchard, an' the day you got her," said Julia.

Tamea looked up at him pridefully. She was wearing a white dress, white silk stockings and white buckskin shoes. Her hair, caught at her nape with a scarlet ribbon, hung in a dusky cascade down her fine straight back.

The combination was startling, vivid, amazingly artistic, and Dan stood lost in admiration. If Tamea could only have managed a smile that predicated happiness rather than sadness, Dan told himself she would have been ravishingly beautiful.

"You're tremendous! Perfectly tremendous!" he assured Tamea. "But that stunning dress——"

"I took the liberty of telephoning Miss Morrison," Mrs. Pippy gurgled. "I sent Graves over after some things of hers I thought might fit Miss Larrieau."

"I am extremely grateful to you, Mrs. Pippy." In

the back of his head the words of Sooey Wan were ringing: "Missie Pip velly sorry no can understand at first. No ketchum pearl." Whatever the reason behind her present cordiality, she was making a strenuous effort to overcome the unfortunate impression she had made upon Tamea a half-hour previous.

Sooey Wan appeared in the dining room entrance and beamed cordially upon the guest. "What Sooey Wan tell you, boss? Velly nice, eh? You bet. Dinner leady."

Dan silenced the wretch with a furious glance, took Tamea by the arm and steered her into the dining room. Sooey Wan retreated, but paused at the entrance to the butler's pantry and grinned his approval before disappearing into the kitchen to pass out two plates of soup for Julia to serve. Mrs. Pippy disappeared.

Having tucked Tamea's chair in under her, Dan took his place opposite. Tamea looked around the dining room with frank approval. She appeared a trifle subdued by the somber richness of it, the vague shadows cast by the warm pale pink glow of the four candles in four old silver candlesticks, the dark bowl, flower-laden, in the center of the table.

Dan was aware that she was watching him; not until he had selected his soup spoon from among—to Tamea—a bewildering array of silverware, did she imitate his action. Her host instantly realized that

the niceties of hospitality would have to be dispensed with for the sake of Tamea's education; consequently, when Julia entered with some toasted crackers and approached Tamea with the intention of serving her first, Dan caught Julia's eye and directed her to his side.

"You will serve me first," he whispered and helped himself. Tamea did likewise.

"Now, her French father taught her to break her crackers into her soup and partake of the soup without regard to the resultant melody. I will see if she is a victim of habit," he decided.

He waited. Tamea set the crackers on her butter plate, as she had observed him do; like him, she made no movement to eat them. Dan took up his butter knife and buttered a cracker. Tamea instantly searched out her butter knife—Dan would have been willing to wager considerable she had never seen one before—and buttered her cracker. Bite for bite and sip for sip she followed his lead, her smoky glance seldom straying from him. Observing that she was not using her napkin, Dan flirted his, on pretense of straightening it out, and respread it. Immediately Tamea unfolded her napkin and spread it.

"She'll do," Dan soliloquized. "Doesn't know a thing, but has the God-given grace to know she doesn't know and is smart enough not to try to four-flush. That girl has brains to spare. She speaks when she

is spoken to, but tonight silence is not good for her. She must not think too much about her father." Aloud he said: "Tamea, what was your life in Riva like?"

"Very simple, Dan Pritchard. While our family ruled Riva we were rulers with little ruling to do. Ten years ago my mother's father died. After that my mother and I spent many months each year with my father aboard the Moorea. My mother did not speak good French, but my father would speak to me in no other tongue. He taught me to read and write French and English, and when I was twelve years old he brought a woman from Manga Riva to be my governess. She was half Samoan and half English, and she had been educated in England. The island blood called her back. She played the piano and was lazy and would get drunk if she could, but she feared my father, so she taught me faithfully each day when sober. My father paid her well—too well."

"What became of her, Tamea?"

"She is dead. Influenza in nineteen eighteen. Our people do not survive it, although I was very ill with it. My father said it was his blood that saved me."

"Doubtless. What did you do all day in Riva?"

"In the morning, early, I swam in the river or in the lagoon. The tiger shark seldom comes inside the reef. Then breakfast and lessons for two hours, then some sleep and more lessons late in the afternoon, followed, perhaps, by another swim. Then dinner and

after dinner some music and song and perhaps a dance. Twice a year, sometimes three times a year, we would have a big feast when some schooner would call for water and supplies and offer trade for our copra. But my father controlled that."

"Were you happy, Tamea?"

"Oh, yes, very!"

"When your mother died, was your father in Riva?"

"No, he came two months later. When he left I went with him, to go to school in Tahiti. I have lived two years in Tahiti, and studied English and French with a school teacher from Australia. She was governess to the children of a Frenchman who was a good friend of my father."

"So that's why you speak such good English."

She smiled happily. "You think so, Monsieur Dan Pritchard?"

He nodded. "And do not call me Monsieur Dan Pritchard," he suggested. "Just call me plain Dan."

"As you like, Plain Dan."

Julia, listening, burst into a guffaw, caught herself in the middle of it and was covered with confusion. Tamea looked at her very suspiciously, but Julia's quick Celtic wit saved her. She pretended to have a violent fit of coughing.

"Do you think you will be happy in San Francisco, Tamea?" Dan queried, in an effort to stimulate conversation.

"Who knows? Where one is not known, where it is cold and there is neither singing nor dancing nor laughter nor love——"

"Oh, that will come after you get acquainted! The first thing you must do is to become familiar with your surroundings and outgrow a very natural feeling of loneliness and, perhaps, homesickness. Then you shall be sent to a boarding school and become a very fine young lady."

The suggestion aroused no enthusiasm in his guest, so he tried a new tack and one which he felt assured would appeal to the eternal feminine in her.

"Tomorrow I shall ask Miss Morrison to go shopping with you and buy a wonderful wardrobe for you, Tamea."

"I will take this woman Julia instead, if you please, Plain Dan," she replied.

"Call me Dan," he pleaded. "Just one word—Dan."

She nodded. "How long will I stay in your house, Dan?"

"Why, as long as you care to, Tamea."

Again the grateful and adorable smile. "Then I shall stay here with you always, Dan."

"Do you think we can manage without quarreling?"

"There will be no quarreling."

"But you will obey me, Tamea. You will recognize my authority and do exactly what I tell you to do."

She sighed.

"Privately she thinks that's a pretty large order," Dan decided.

Slowly Tamea sipped a glass of light white wine and pecked, without enthusiasm, at a lamb chop. She sighed again.

"I am very tired, Dan," she said wearily. "I cannot eat more. I would sleep."

Dan nodded to Julia, who set her tray on the sideboard and stood prepared to escort her charge to bed. Tamea rose, walked around to Dan's chair, put her arms around his neck and drew his head toward her until her cheek rested against his.

"You are a good father and kind. I shall love you, *chéri*," she said softly. "You will kiss your little girl good night? No? But, yes, I demand it, *mon père*. There, that is better. . . . Good night. In the morning I will be brave; I will not be sad and oppress this household with my sorrows."

She kissed him. It was not a mere peck but it was undoubtedly filial, and Dan indeed was grateful in a full realization of this.

"Good night, Tamea, dear child," he said, and watched Julia lead her away.

He was still watching her as she crossed the entrance hall to the foot of the stairs, when the door of the butler's pantry squeaked very slightly. Dan turned. Sooey Wan's nose was at the aperture, and one of his slant eyes was bent appreciatively upon Dan.

"Get out," Dan cried. "What are you spying for, you outrageous heathen?"

"Velly nice. Captain's girl velly nice. Heap nice kissee, eh? You bet! Velly nice!"

Dan was instantly furious. "Sooey Wan," he roared, "you're fired!"

"Boss," retorted Sooey Wan in dulcet, honeyed tones, "you klazy."

The door slid back into place and Sooey Wan returned chuckling to the domain where he was king.

An hour later, as Dan finished his first postprandial cigar, he decided that after all there might be a modicum of truth in Sooey Wan's assertion. Sane he might be now—that is, moderately sane—but for all that a still small voice had commenced to whisper that the extraordinary events of this day were but a preliminary to still more extraordinary events to follow. And that night he dreamed that a Chinese infant, with a tuft of white ribbon tied in a bow at his midriff and armed with bow and arrow, climbed up on the footboard of his bed and shot him, crying meanwhile:

"Velly nice! Velly, velly nice!"

CHAPTER VII

THE guest chambers in Dan Pritchard's home were two in number—richly furnished but solid looking rooms for men. Julia scuttled from one to the other, in a frenzy of indecision as to which was worthy to receive her charge, while Tamea sat at the head of the staircase and waited. Julia was several minutes making her decision as to whether Tamea would look best in the room with taupe carpet and the French gray single bed, or the one with the old rose carpet and the old black walnut double bed. Finally she decided on the former, and then sought Mrs. Pippy to ask if Miss Morrison had sent over a spare nightgown. It developed that Miss Morrison had neglected this important detail, so Mrs. Pippy graciously donated one of her own and Julia returned with it.

Then she discovered that Tamea, being a young woman of initiative and decision, had very promptly solved the problem of sleeping quarters. While she had been no stranger to bedsteads and pillows, nevertheless her upbringing in Riva had taught Tamea that there was no necessity to be particular as to a lodging for the night. She could always glean an excellent rest

on a mat spread on a stone floor, with a polished section of the trunk of a coco palm as a pillow; and while waiting for Julia to return, the richly carpeted floor had attracted her attention. Promptly she lay down in the hall, pillowed her head on her arm and went to sleep almost instantly.

"Poor lamb!" murmured the sympathetic Julia, and fled to summon Mrs. Pippy to behold the unconventional guest. Mrs. Pippy gazed disapprovingly, shook her handsome silvery head as if to say, "Mr. Pritchard's action in bringing this tomboy home for us to care for is quite beyond *me!*" and retired to her room again, still shaking her head.

Julia awakened her sleepy charge. "Come with me, Tammy, darlin'," she pleaded. "Sure, the flure is no place for you."

"It is very soft," Tamea protested. "And very warm, for such a cold country."

"Wait till Sooey Wan—bad cess to him!—puts the furnace out. Ye'd be froze shtiff in the mornin', Tammy——"

"My name is Tamea Oluolu Larrieau. You may call me Tamea, but to others I must be Mademoiselle Larrieau."

"Oh, sure, why not lave me call ye Tammy? Not a one but me will use that name."

"Your desire is granted because you are kind to me, Julia."

"Thank you, Tammy. Here, sit you down in this chair and I'll take off your shlippers. . . . Now, thin, here's your nightgown. Take off your clothes and put the nightgown on whilst I fix the bed for you and get you a dhrink of wather."

Tamea held up Mrs. Pippy's nightgown and looked it over critically. "The wife of the missionary in Riva had several such as this," she commented. "It is not pretty. I had prettier ones than this aboard ship, but —for a reason—I brought no baggage ashore with me. I do not like this garment." She tossed it through the open bathroom door into the tub.

"Now, Tammy," began Julia, mildly expostulating.

"I will not wear it, Julia."

"Sure, why not, Tammy, you little ninny, you?"

"What is a ninny?"

"Heaven knows," the helpless Julia replied, "but I'm thinkin' I'm it, whatever it may be. Why won't you wear the nightgown, Tammy? Sure all nice gir'rls——"

"It belongs to her," said Tamea and pointed majestically upward. "It bears the letter *P*."

"Be the Rock of Cashel," sighed poor Julia, "you're windictive, so you are," and without further ado she went upstairs and brought down one of her own plain *chemises de nuit*. Without a word Tamea donned it and crept dutifully into bed.

"Do you not say your prayers before you get into

bed, Tammy?" the pious Julia queried reproachfully.

Tamea shook her head, dark and beautiful against the snowy pillow. Julia sighed. Her own problems were always dumped, metaphorically speaking, in the lap of her Christian God, night and morning.

"This is truly a bed for a queen," said Tamea thoughtfully. "Is Monsieur Dan Pritchard, then, a very rich man?"

"He have barrels of it," Julia replied reverently.

"My father gave me to him, Julia."

"Faith, an' that's where he showed his common sinse. Divil a finer gintleman could you find the wide wur'rld over."

Fell a long silence. Then: "Where is Madame Pritchard?"

"The masther has never been married, Tammy."

"What? Has he, then, in his house none but serving women?"

"Ssh! Don't talk like that, Tammy. Of course he hasn't."

"Strange," murmured Tamea thoughtfully. "He is different from other men of his race. Have no women sought his favor?"

Julia was embarrassed and exasperated. "How the divil should I know?" she protested indignantly.

"You live in this house. You are his servant. Have you not ears? Are you blind?"

"I never shpy on the masther."

"Perhaps," Tamea suggested, "it is because Monsieur Dan Pritchard has a hatred of women."

"Sorra bit o' that."

"Then is it that women have a hatred of him?"

"They'd give the two eyes out of their heads to marry him."

A silence. "All this is very strange, Julia."

"Don't worry about it, Tammy. Go to sleep now."

"Here is a great mystery. Has Monsieur Dan Pritchard, then, no children?"

"Heaven forbid!" Julia was now thoroughly scandalized.

"Here *is* a mystery. Does he not desire sons to inherit his name and wealth?"

"I never discussed the matther wit' him."

"This is, indeed, a strange country with strange customs."

"We'll think o' that in the mornin', Tammy darlin'. Shall I put out the light?"

"Yes, my good Julia. Good night."

"Good night, dear." Julia switched off the light and retired to the door. Here, poised for flight, she turned and shot back at her charge a question that had been perplexing her:

"Are you a Protestant or a Catholic, Tammy?"

"Neither," murmured Tamea.

"Glory be! 'Tis not a Jew you are?"

"No."

"Well, what, thin?"

"Are you trying to convert me, Julia?"

"I am not."

"Then why do you ask?"

"I'm that curious, Tammy."

"If you act like a missionary's wife I shall dismiss you from my service, Julia. I have no religion. I am free. I do what I jolly well please. Yes, you bet."

"An' there's an idea for you!" Julia soliloquized as she passed softly out. "Begorry, we'll have a grand time of it with that one, so we will. Somebody's been puttin' notions in her head. *Ochone!* Where the divil was that one raised, I dunno. Angel that she is to look at she's had a slack father an' mother, I'll lay odds on that."

Julia sighed and went downstairs to seek the aid of Sooey Wan in scratching out the numbers of her choice on a ticket for the next day's drawing in the Chinese lottery. She found Sooey Wan washing the dishes and singing softly.

"Are you singin' or cryin', Sooey Wan?" Julia greeted him.

"Hullah for hell," said Sooey Wan. He tossed a soup plate to the ceiling and caught it deftly as it came down. "Boss ketchum velly nice girl," he began.

"Can't the poor man be kind to an orphan without you, you yellow divil, puttin' dogs in windows?"

"Velly nice," Sooey Wan repeated doggedly. "Pretty soon I think give boss many sons."

"Say-y-y, what sort o' place is this gettin' to be, anyhow?"

"Pretty soon Sooey Wan think this going be legular place. One house no ketchum baby, no legular house."

"Say nothin' to Mrs. Pippy of what's in that ould head of yours, Sooey Wan. What wit' one haythen downstairs an' another upstairs the woman'll be givin' notice."

Sooey Wan pulled open a drawer in the kitchen table and tossed out a handful of bills and silver. "Ketchum ten spot for you today, Julia," he explained. "You lucky. Ketchum ten spot, ketchum pearl."

"Faith, you'll catch more than that if you don't lear'rn to mind your own business," Julia warned him.

Long after the household had retired Dan Pritchard sat before the living room fireplace reviewing in his mind's eye the startling events of that day. He felt depressed, obsessed by an unreasonable, wholly inexplicable presentiment of events still more startling to occur in the not very distant future.

As a rule, the majority of women puzzled Dan, many of them frightened him, and all of them disturbed him. Of all the women he had ever known, Maisie Morrison alone appeared to possess the gift of contributing to his mental rest, his sense of spiritual well-being, even

while her practical, definite and positive personality occasionally disturbed his creature comfort, robbed him of that sense of leadership and strength which it is the right of all men to exhibit toward the women of their choice, and appeared to render null and void the necessity for any exhibition of the protective instinct. Infrequently Dan complained to himself that Maisie would be a transcendently wonderful girl if she but possessed just a trifle more imagination; having convinced himself that this was so, he would watch for definite evidence to convict Maisie of such a lack, only to be hurled back into his old state of mental confusion by indubitable evidence that Maisie could read him and his innermost thoughts as readily as if he were a signboard.

When he had complained to Maisie that morning that he was a square peg in the round hole, he had voiced the unrest which all born radicals experience when forced to live conservatively. For Dan knew he was a radical in his viewpoint on many things held sacred by his conservative brethren; he knew he lacked the instinctive caution and constructive conservatism so evident in Maisie. He felt as one whose soul was hobbled with a ball and chain. Maisie, he knew, suffered from no such sense of repression, and this knowledge of her mental freedom sometimes forced upon him a secret, almost womanish irritation.

Sometimes Dan was almost convinced that he ought

to rid himself of his habit of introspection, marry Maisie and live happily ever afterward. Then, just as he would be almost on the point of growing loverlike, Maisie would seem to pop out at him from a mental ambush; would seem to lay a cool finger on the soul of him and say quite positively: "Here, Dan, is where it hurts. The pain isn't where you think it is at all. You are a foolish, imaginative man, and if you do not heed my direction now, you will eventually regret that you did not."

And then Dan, outwardly smiling and expansive but inwardly glum and shriveling, would tell himself that he could never, never dwell in idyllic married bliss with such a dominating and interfering woman; and Maisie, secretly furious, baffled, would watch him change from the devoted admirer to the warm friend.

Tonight Dan decided that he was, beyond the slightest vestige of a doubt, tremendously fond of Maisie Morrison. But—he was not at all certain that he loved her well enough to ask her to marry him; he marveled now, more than ever previously, what imp of impulse had moved him to kiss her that morning. How warm and sweet and responsive had been that momentary pressure of her lips to his? He visualized again that lambent light that had leaped into her eyes . . . had he gone too far?

The telephone in the booth under the stairs in the entrance hall rang faintly. He reached for the ex-

tension telephone on the living room table and said: "Yes, Maisie?"

"How did you know it was I?" Maisie's voice demanded.

"I cannot answer that question, Maisie. I merely knew. You see, I was just beginning to think that I might have called you up and——"

"Indeed, yes," she interrupted. How like her, he reflected. Her agile brain was always leaping ahead to a conclusion and landing on it fairly and squarely. "I have waited three hours for a report from you, Dan, and when eleven o'clock came and you had not telephoned I couldn't restrain my curiosity any longer. Mrs. Pippy telephoned about seven o'clock and told me an extraordinary and unbelievable tale of a semi-savage young woman whom you had brought home and established as a guest in your bachelor domicile. Mrs. Pippy tried her best to appear calm, but I sensed——"

"I'm quite certain you did, Maisie," he interrupted in turn. "You sensed Mrs. Pippy's amazement, indignation and disapproval. You're the most marvelous woman for sensing things that I have ever known."

"But then, Dan," she reminded him, "you haven't known very many women intimately. You're such a shy man. Sometimes I think you must have gleaned all of your knowledge of my sex from your father

and Sooey Wan. Who is the South Sea belle, Dan, and what *do* you mean by picking up with such a creature and expecting me to help you render her presentable?"

"I didn't expect you to, Maisie. I didn't ask you and I didn't suggest that Mrs. Pippy ask you."

"I couldn't get any very coherent information from Mrs. Pippy. She was greatly agitated. However, I called Julia up a few minutes later and from Julia I learned that your guest hasn't sufficient of a wardrobe to pad a crutch."

"Julia is very amusing," he replied evenly. "However, do not think the young lady arrived here in a hula-hula costume. I am her guardian."

"How do you know you are?" Maisie demanded, a bit crisply.

"Her father, Captain Larrieau, of our schooner Moorea, asked me to be before he died this afternoon."

"Hum-m-m!" Maisie was silent momentarily. "How like a man to think he can fill such an order without outside help."

He was exasperated. "There you go, Maisie," he complained, "jumping to a conclusion."

"If I've jumped to a conclusion, Dan, rest assured I have landed squarely on my objective. Why didn't you telephone me the instant you reached home with your ward? I would have been happy to aid you, Dan."

"I am sure you would have been, Maisie, but—well——"

"I knew I was right, Dan. The only way I can find things out is to be rude and ask questions. You thought I might not approve of——"

"Of what?" he demanded triumphantly.

"Of the young woman you brought home with you, of course." Maisie's voice carried just a hint of irritation.

"Certainly not. I was certain you would approve of her. She's quite a child—about seventeen or eighteen years old, I should say—and a perfectly dazzling creature—ah, that is, amazingly interesting in her directness, her frankness, her unconventionality and innocence. I do hope you'll like her. I thought at first I could entrust her to Mrs. Pippy but——"

"I gathered as much, Dan. Now, start at the beginning and tell me everything about her."

Dan complied with her demand. When the recital was ended, said Maisie: "What are you going to do with her, Dan?"

"My instructions from her father were to educate her and affiance her to some worthy fellow. I shall cast my eye around the local French colony after the girl has completed her schooling. She has a fortune of approximately a quarter of a million dollars—always an interesting subject for contemplation and discussion in the matrimonial preliminaries." He

heard her chuckle softly and realized that she found amusement visualizing him in the rôle of a matchmaker. "I suppose," he ventured, "you're wondering why I didn't take her to a hotel."

"Any other man in your sphere of life would, but I am not so optimistic as to expect you to do the usual thing. I'm consumed with curiosity to see your Tamea, Dan."

"A meeting can be arranged," he answered dryly. "As soon as my little queen has had an opportunity to purchase a wardrobe befitting her rank and wealth, I shall be happy to have you presented at court, Maisie."

"I suppose you're going to select her wardrobe?"

"No, I think Julia will attend to that."

"In heaven's name, Dan, why Julia? Have you ever seen Julia all dressed up and about to set out for Golden Gate Park? Mrs. Pippy has excellent taste."

"Mrs. Pippy is not, I fear, the favorite of the queen."

"Then I shall attend to her outfitting, Dan.

"Will you, Maisie, dear?"

"Of course, idiot."

"Well, that lifts a burden off my shoulders."

"You do not deserve such consideration, Dan. You're too uncommunicative when you are the possessor of amazing news. However, you're such a helpless, blundering Simple Simon I knew somebody

would have to manage you while you're managing Tamea. So I concluded to volunteer for the sacrifice."

"Maisie, you're a peach. I could kiss you for that speech."

"Really, you're running wild, Dan. You kissed me once today. And I've been wondering why ever since."

"How should I know?" he confessed. He had a sudden, freakish impulse to annoy her.

"Stupid! Were I as stupid as you—— I'll be at your house at about ten o'clock tomorrow and take charge of your problem."

"I shall be eternally grateful."

"And eternally silly and eternally afraid of me and what I'm going to think about everything. I could pull your nose. Good night." She hung up without waiting for his answer.

"I fear me Maisie is the bossy, efficient type of young woman," he soliloquized as he replaced the receiver. "I hope she and Tamea will hit it off together. I sincerely hope it."

At midnight Sooey Wan came in from Chinatown, following a prodigious burning of devil papers in a local joss house and a somewhat profitable two hours of poker.

His slant eyes appraised Dan kindly. "Boss," he ordered, "go bed. You all time burn 'em too muchee light, too muchee coal, too muchee wood. Cost muchee money." He moved briskly about the room, switching

off the electric light. "Too muchee thinkee, too muchee headache," he warned Dan. "You not happy, boss, you thinkee too much. No good!"

"Oh, confound your Oriental philosophy!" Dan rasped back at him. "The curse of it is, you're right!"

Sooey Wan pointed authoritatively upward and Dan slowly climbed the stairs to his room.

Thus ended a momentous day.

CHAPTER VIII

AT breakfast the following morning Maisie Morrison decided to make no mention to her aunt and uncle of the interesting bit of news concerning Dan Pritchard of which she was the possessor.

Always cautious and conservative, she preferred to place herself in full possession of the facts in the case, and to have this information bolstered up by her own feeling about the situation following a meeting with Dan's ward, before discussing his business with anybody.

Maisie was mildly amused in the knowledge that Dan, of all men, should have such a problem thrust upon him; she looked forward with no little interest to watching the peculiar man approach his unusual duty. She expected if she mentioned the matter that old Casson would laugh patronizingly and pretend to find the situation devoid of a mature man's interest; he might even indulge himself in some light and caustic criticism, with a touch of elephantine humor in it. That had seemed to be his attitude toward Dan for a year past and Maisie resented it fiercely—all the more fiercely, in fact, because her position in Casson's household forbade an expression of her resentment.

"I think I shall motor to Del Monte this morning for two weeks of golf," old Casson announced to his wife and Maisie at breakfast. "Suppose you two pack up and go with me."

"I think that would be delightful, John," his wife replied.

"I have other fish to fry. Sorry!" Maisie answered him. "If you had hinted of this yesterday, Uncle John——"

"My dear Maisie, the idea but this moment occurred to me. Better alter your plans and come along."

She shook her head.

"It occurred to me this instant—as I have already stated—" Casson continued, "to escape boredom for two weeks. Our schooner Moorea is in port and will remain here that long, in all probability. That means the office will be set by the heels. Her bear-like skipper, Larrieau, will go roaring from one room to the other, disturbing everybody except Pritchard and amusing everybody except me. I cannot tolerate the man, and if I should see too much of him I fear I might forget his record for efficiency and dismiss him. He was a pet of Dan's father, and Dan, too, makes much of him. I dislike pets in a business office."

Maisie looked at him coolly. "Then you will be happy to know that your contemplated exile to Del Monte is quite unnecessary, Uncle John. Captain Larrieau was discovered, upon arrival, to be a leper, so

he sent ashore for Dan, settled all of his business and committed suicide by drowning yesterday evening."

"Bless my soul! Where did you glean this astounding intelligence?"

"I talked with Dan over the telephone late last night."

"You should have told me sooner, Maisie."

Old Casson's voice was stern; his weak, handsome face pretended chagrin.

"Why?"

"Why? What a question! Isn't the man in my employ—or, at least, wasn't he?"

"He was in the employ of Casson and Pritchard, and Dan Pritchard has attended to the matter for the firm."

"I should have been communicated with immediately. Pritchard should have telephoned to me, not to you."

"Oh dear, Uncle John! One would think you revered the man so highly you planned to have the bay dragged to recover his body, instead of being happy in the knowledge that you have gotten rid of the nuisance."

"Humph-h-h-h! We'll not discuss it further, my dear. However, it is difficult for me to refrain from expressing my irritation. How like young Pritchard it was to disregard me entirely in this matter! For all the deference or consideration that fellow pays me as the senior member of the firm, I might as well be a traffic policeman."

Maisie's fine eyes flamed in sudden anger. "Has it ever occurred to you, Uncle John, that in declining to annoy you with unnecessary details, by his persistence in relieving you of the labor and worry of the business management of Casson and Pritchard, Dan may be showing you the courtesy and consideration due you as the senior member of the firm?"

"I am not a back number—yet, Maisie," he assured her.

"Why do you not buy him out, Uncle John? He seems to be a very great trial to you."

Old Casson appeared to consider this suggestion very seriously as he gravely tapped the shell of his matutinal egg. "That isn't a half bad idea, Maisie," he answered. "At present, however, I am scarcely in position to buy his interest. I anticipate this condition will be materially changed within the next three or four months, and then——"

He paused eloquently and scooped his egg into the glass.

"I infer you have a hen on," Maisie suggested.

"Perhaps the metaphor would be less mixed if we substituted a goose for the hen. I believe the goose is the fowl currently credited with the ability to lay golden eggs."

"John Casson!" His wife now spoke for the first time. "Are you mixed in another gamble?"

"Not at all, my dear, not at all. I have invested

in several cargoes of Chinese rice at a very low price, and I have sold one cargo at a very high price. I am holding the others for the crest of a market that is rising like a toy balloon. It isn't gambling, my dear. It's just a mortal certainty."

The good lady sighed. How often, in the thirty years of her life with John Casson, had she heard him, in those same buoyant, confident, mellifluous tones, assure her of the infallibility of victory due to his superior judgment!

As usual, Maisie placed her finger on the sore spot. "What does Dan think of it, Uncle John?"

"He doesn't think anything, my dear. He doesn't know."

"Oh, I see! This is a private venture of yours?"

He nodded. "Yes—and no, Maisie. It's a Casson and Pritchard deal, only I'm engineering it myself. I'm going to prove to that overconfident young man the truth of the old saying 'Nothing risked, nothing gained.' Why, the biggest thing in years lay right under his nose—and he passed it by."

"He was in Honolulu on that pineapple deal when you stumbled across this good thing, was he not, Uncle John?"

"Yes, but then he knew about it before he left for Honolulu."

"Well, I hope you'll make a killing, Uncle John."

He beamed his thanks upon her. "When I do—and

I cannot *help* doing it—I'm going to be mighty nice to my niece," he assured her. "However," he continued reminiscently, "my day for taking a sporting chance is over. I've learned my lesson."

"Have you?" his wife ventured hopefully.

"Just to prove to you that I have," he challenged, "if I get an offer of twenty-four cents per pound, f.o.b. Havana, today, I'll sell every pound of rice I have in transit or hold under purchase contract."

"What was the market yesterday, John?"

"Twenty-three cents."

"Sell at that today," Maisie urged him.

He smiled and shook his head. These women! How little they knew of the great game of business! How little did they realize that, to succeed, a man must be possessed of an amazing courage, a stupendous belief in his own powers, in his knowledge of the game he is playing. Maisie read him accurately. He was as easy to read as an electric sign.

When he had departed for the office, Mrs. Casson, a dainty, very youthful appearing woman of fifty-five, and long since robbed of any illusions concerning certain impossible phases of her husband's character, spoke up:

"Sometimes, Maisie, I suspect John Casson is in his second childhood."

"You're wrong, Auntie. In some respects he hasn't emerged from his first childhood. For instance, Uncle

John is nurturing the belief that Dan isn't aware of his operations."

"You think Dan knows?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Has he told you so?"

"No."

"He ought to be told."

"I shall tell him—this very morning. Uncle John, wrapped in his supreme sense of self-sufficiency, appears to have forgotten that in an unlimited partnership each partner is irrevocably bound by the actions of the other."

"I wonder at Dan's patience with him."

"I do not. Dan has explained it to me."

Mrs. Casson's maternal glance dwelt tenderly upon her dead sister's daughter. "Maisie, I want to talk to you about Dan," she began, but Maisie raised a deprecating hand.

"What profit could possibly arise from such a discussion?"

Mrs. Casson, however, was a woman driven by curiosity. "I wonder if he is in love with you, my dear. Sometimes I am almost certain of it, and at other times I am not so certain."

"I think dear old simple Dan finds himself similarly afflicted."

"Well?" The query, the inflection and the dramatic pause before the good soul continued were not lost on

Maisie. "Why don't you do something about it, dear?"

"Why should I?"

"You're twenty-four years old—and certainly Dan Pritchard is the most eligible bachelor in your set. And I know you're very, very fond of him."

"Everybody is. He is wholly lovable."

"Well, then, Maisie——"

"Men dislike pursuit, dear. That is their peculiar prerogative. I prefer to be dear to Dan Pritchard, as his closest friend, rather than to disturb him as a prospective wife. Dan is old-fashioned, quite dignified, idealistic, altruistic, artistic, and as shy and retiring as a rabbit. I'm certain he isn't the least bit interested in your plans to alter his scheme of existence by adding a wife to it."

"You'd marry Dan Pritchard tomorrow if he asked you today."

"Perhaps," Maisie agreed. "However, I shall not pursue him nor shall I hurl myself at him. I prefer to operate on the principle that, after all, I may prove more or less eligible myself!"

"You desire to be pursued, I see."

"What woman does not—by the right man?"

"Then is Dan Pritchard the right man?"

"No woman could really answer such a question truthfully until after she had been married to Dan. I have never given much thought to Dan as a matrimonial possibility."

"That is an admission that you have at least given him *some* thought, Maisie."

"Of course, silly. What is a girl to think when a man's freakish humor dictates that he shall develop all of the outward evidences of a sentimental interest one week and shrink from exhibiting the slightest evidence of it a week later? Sometimes I think that Dan is a habit with me; sometimes I'm quite certain I am a habit with him. I think I was twelve years old when Dan took me to a vaudeville show one Saturday afternoon. I remember I held his hand all through the show and he fed me so much candy I was ill. However, he is a pleasant and delightful habit to me, and I am not anxious to renounce him; I hope he feels the same toward me. By the way, I have an engagement with him this morning. I must run along and dress."

She left her aunt gazing speculatively after her. Mrs. Casson shook her head and sighed. "It's her frightful spirit of independence," she soliloquized. "She scares him away. I just know it. And I do wish I knew what to do about it."

Providentially, she did not!

CHAPTER IX

PROMPTLY at ten o'clock the Casson limousine deposited Maisie in front of the Pritchard residence. Dan, watching for her appearance from behind the front window curtains, observed that two young women and a fussy, somewhat threadbare little man of undoubted Hebraic ancestry emerged from the limousine and followed her up the stairs.

Julia opened the door and Maisie led her followers into the living room. "Good morning, Dan," she greeted him and gave him her hand. "I've brought half a dozen evening dresses which may or may not impress your ward; also a model to parade the dresses for Tamea's inspection, and a fitter to note the necessary alterations. Of course, she'll have to have some street clothes, so I've brought Rubenstein, my tailor, to take measurements."

"By Jupiter, Maisie, you're a marvel! You think of everything." He pressed Maisie's hand in his. "You may ask Miss Larrieau if she will be good enough to come down to the living room, Julia," he directed.

"I will go up with Julia," Maisie said, and followed the maid.

The Queen of Riva sat in a small, low chair before the window. She wore a dark silk dressing gown, which the democratic Julia had filched from Dan Pritchard's clothes closet, and she was gazing down into the street, gray and wet with fog. Her elbows rested on her knees, her face reposed in her hands, and she was weeping, silently and without a quiver. Julia went to her, patted her wet cheek and said:

"Look up, Tammy darlin'. Here is Miss Morrison to see you. Miss Morrison is the kind leddy that sint over the nice dhress for you last night, an' sure she has tailors an' cloak models and dhressmakers an' dhresses downshtairs waitin' for you."

Tamea dried her eyes, shook her wonderful hair back over her ivory brow, rose slowly and faced Maisie with a certain cool deliberation. Her eyes swept Maisie's figure; she forced a smile of greeting.

"I am—happy to—meet—Miss Morrison. When one is—almost—alone and very unhappy—kindness from a stranger is like the sun that comes to dry the sails, following a storm."

"Her greeting is as regal as her bearing," was Maisie's thought. She favored Tamea with a courteous little nod and her bright smile—then held out her hand. Tamea hesitated, then extended her own.

"You are Maisie?" she queried.

"Yes, I am Maisie. How did you know, Miss Larrieau?"

"I guessed," Tamea answered simply. "You are a much nicer woman than I had expected to meet."

Maisie flushed, partly with pleasure, partly with embarrassment. "I shall try to be nice to you, Miss Larrieau, always."

"You may call me Tamea, if you please. I shall call you Maisie."

"Will ye listen to that!" Julia declared happily. "Sure, Tammy's no different from the rest of us. She's in love wit' you at sight, Miss Morrison, so she is."

"I think with you, Tamea, that we should dispense with formality. I shall be happy to be your friend and to help you to adjust your life to new conditions."

"I accept your friendship." Tamea's words came slowly, gravely. "You are not a woman of common blood."

Maisie stepped close to her, removed from her fingers the sodden little ball of a handkerchief and replaced it with a fresh one of filmy lace from her handbag. "Tell my chauffeur to go back to the house and fetch Céleste, my maid," she ordered Julia. "Between Céleste and me this wonderful hair shall be done exactly right. When you come upstairs again, Julia, bring up those boxes and the two girls in the living room. Rubenstein shall wait."

"Monsieur Dan Pritchard told me at breakfast that Miss Morrison would call to help me select the cloth-

ing which it is fit that I should wear in this country," said Tamea when they were alone.

"You are a brunette—one of the wonderful, olive-skinned type. With those great dark eyes and that wealth of jet-black hair you will look amazingly chic in something red and silvery or white. May I see your foot, Tamea?"

Tamea sat down and thrust out a brown foot. It was somewhat shorter and broader than Maisie had expected to see, but the arch was high and the toes perfect, with the great toe quite prehensile.

"You have gone barefoot a great deal, Tamea?"

"In Riva, always. In Tahiti I wore sandals."

"You will have to wear shoes here, Tamea. I think a number five will do, but we must be very particular not to spoil that foot. It is the only natural foot I have ever seen except on a baby. How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

Maisie could scarcely believe this statement. Physically Tamea was a fully developed woman, perhaps five feet seven inches tall, a creature of soft curves, yet lithe and graceful and falling just a trifle short of being slim. Her ears were delicately formed but of generous proportions, her neck, sturdy and muscular, swept in beautiful curves to meet a torso full-breasted and deep.

"Her form is perfect, and I believe she has a mag-

nificent back," thought Maisie. "Her neck and head are Junoesque."

They were, indeed. Tamea's head, in shape, resembled her father's in that it was larger than that of most women, and of that width between the ears which denotes brain capacity and consequently intelligence. Her features were not small; indeed, they were almost large, but of patrician regularity and loveliness of line. Her brow was high and wide, her eyebrows fine, silken and thick, while her eyelashes were extraordinarily long, giving a slightly sleepy appearance to large, intelligent, beautiful eyes of a very dark brown shade—almost black. Her chin was well developed, firm; from behind full, red, healthy lips Maisie saw peeping fine, strong, white, regular teeth. Tamea's skin was clear to the point of near-transparency and her hands were small with lovely tapered fingers.

"A perfect woman," thought Maisie. "She is more than beautiful. She is magnificent—and when she has been dressed properly——"

Her thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of Julia and the cloak model and fitter. Thereafter, for an hour, Tamea dwelt in paradise. Maisie's taste, in the matter of dress, was undoubtedly exquisite, and when she discovered that this exotic islander could wear with dignity raiment which, on another woman, would be regarded as flamboyant, Maisie felt that quiet joy which comes to all women who discover beauty or

help to create it. Tamea, too, developed all of the interest of her sex in the beautiful garments submitted for her selection; so engrossing was that interest that by the time Rubenstein had departed Tamea's drooping spirits had been more than a little uplifted. She commanded Julia to summon Dan to admire such portions of her wardrobe as she had already selected.

"My dear, but you must wait until you are fully dressed," Mrs. Pippy cautioned her. Tamea was barefooted and wearing the skirt of a ready-made tailored suit, but not the coat; neither was she wearing waist or brassière.

"Why?" she demanded coolly. "Why should I demand of Monsieur Dan Pritchard that he wait upon my pleasure?"

"But you can't receive him half dressed."

Tamea, for answer, took from the dresser a large framed photograph of Maisie Morrison in evening dress. "Mademoiselle Maisie was but half dressed when she had this photograph made. Julia, call Monsieur Dan Pritchard."

Mrs. Pippy's cold blue eye warned Julia that the price of obedience might be prohibitive. Julia hesitated.

Tamea, Queen of Riva, stamped a bare foot. "Obey me!" she commanded.

"Och, sure now, Tammy, darlin', listen to Mrs. Pippy, there's a dear——"

"There will be no talk. Obey!"

"Julia," said Mrs. Pippy firmly, "in this house you take your orders from me. When Miss Larrieau is properly dressed she may receive Mr. Pritchard, but not before."

"Julia is my servant. She takes orders from no one but me," Tamea warned Mrs. Pippy. "Dan Pritchard gave Julia to me."

"Julia is not a slave, to be given away at will, Miss Larrieau. She must be consulted in such transactions."

"Did you not accept me as your mistress, Julia?" There could be no evasion.

"I did that," Julia confessed weakly.

"Summon Monsieur Dan Pritchard. Take no heed of this woman—this Pippy."

"If you disobey me, Julia," Mrs. Pippy warned, "I shall be forced to dismiss you without a reference."

"If you disobey *me*, Julia," Tamea countered, "I shall dismiss you but not until you have been beaten. In my country that is how bad servants are treated."

Julia appealed to Maisie. "What shall I do, Miss Morrison?"

Maisie sighed. "It is apparent, Julia," she replied, "that Mrs. Pippy and Tamea have not hit it off very well together. Mrs. Pippy's position in this house must not, she very properly feels, be questioned. Tamea, who has doubtless never heretofore had her authority questioned, has elected to make an issue of the seat of authority. We will seek a compromise." She

turned to Tamea and smiled upon her kindly. "Will you please me, Tamea, by declining to oppose Mrs. Pippy's authority in this house?"

"I will not, Maisie, although I am sorry not to be kind to you. I am not one accustomed to taking orders and I will not have this Pippy thwart my desires. As you say, I have elected to force the issue. It is better thus. Why wait? Julia, for the last time, I order you to obey my command."

"Heaven help me!" groaned Julia, and turned to open the door. Mrs. Pippy's cool, firm voice halted her.

"Julia!"

"I'm thinkin', Mrs. Pippy, ye'll have a hard time queenin' it over a rale queen," said Julia. She made Mrs. Pippy a curious curtsy. "I quits yer service, ma'am," she announced, thereby in the language of the sporting world beating the excellent Mrs. Pippy to the punch. The door closed behind her.

"You are dismissed. Pack and leave at once." Thus the Pippy edict, shouted after the retiring maid.

Tamea smiled and watched the door until Dan Pritchard knocked on it.

"Come, Dan Pritchard," Tamea called. She was standing in the center of the room, on parade as it were, when he entered and permitted his amazed glance to rest upon her. Maisie saw him recoil perceptibly, saw him as quickly become master of the situation.

"Well, well, what a marvelous apparition!" was all he said.

"You like these garments?"

"Indeed I do, Tamea. Put the coat on, please, until I see the fit of it. . . ." He sat down and waited until Tamea had finished. Then: "Stunning, by Jupiter! Maisie, I'm so grateful to you for helping Tamea and me. You're the shadow of a rock in a weary land."

He approached Tamea and fingered the material in her suit. "Do you think this is quite heavy enough, Maisie?" he queried anxiously. "Our climate is not quite so salubrious as our little queen is accustomed to."

Tamea came close to him, grasping each lapel, gazing upward at him with frank approval and admiration.

"You would not care to have your Tamea die?" she queried.

"Indeed, my dear, I would not."

"You would not care to have your Tamea put out of this warm house to suffer in the cold?"

"Certainly not."

"You will never, never put Tamea away from you?"

"Great Scot, no! I promised your father I'd take care of you, child. What's worrying you?"

Tamea sighed. "I have felt the necessity to leave this house," she confessed, "unless assured that my

orders to my servant will not be interfered with. Pippy grows very—well, what you call—fresh!"

Dan sensed the approach of a cyclone and hastily sought the cellar. "My dear Tamea," he assured her, "it is conceivable that you may find *me* growing what you call fresh if you seek to impose your will on mine. Mrs. Pippy's orders to the servants of this house must be obeyed by those servants. Meanwhile, try to be nice and—er—polite to Mrs. Pippy."

"I think you ought to know what Tamea is driving at, Dan," Maisie interposed. "Tamea is in open rebellion against Mrs. Pippy and the disaffection has spread to Julia."

"Mr. Pritchard," said Mrs. Pippy with great dignity, "I have found it necessary to dismiss Julia for insubordination."

"Julia belongs to me. Pippy cannot dismiss my Julia, can she, dear Dan Pritchard?" Thus the unhappy man was caught between the cross-fire of the conflicting pair. Dan looked helplessly at Maisie, who eyed him sympathetically and humorously. "Let there be no weakness here," Tamea warned. "I would have my answer."

"Why, of course, you asked me for Julia and I said you could have her," Dan began. At that moment Julia entered the room. "Julia," Dan queried, "do you desire to remain in the service of Miss Larrieau?"

"Humph! Faith, I've never left her ser'rvice, sir."

"Mrs. Pippy informs me she has dismissed you."

"The back o' me hand to Mrs. Pippy." Julia had started running true to her racial instincts, which dictate a bold, offensive spirit in the face of disaster.

"Julia remains!" cried Tamea.

"Julia goes!"

Devoutly Dan wished that an old-fashioned magician were on hand to render him invisible.

"Dear Mrs. Pippy," he pleaded, "I appeal to the undoubted wisdom of your years—to your innate sense of proportion—er—to your—why, dash it all, this difference of opinion about Julia has me in the very deuce of a box. Surely you must realize, Mrs. Pippy, the total lack of reason, of understanding, from our viewpoint, in this child!"

"Oh," Tamea interrupted coldly, "you think I am a fool!" Suddenly she commenced to cry and cast herself, sobbing, upon the Pritchard breast.

He glanced over her heaving ivory shoulders to Mrs. Pippy, then to Maisie. "I've taken a big contract," he complained.

"Julia goes," said Mrs. Pippy firmly.

Tamea heard the edict and her round, wonderful arms clasped Dan Pritchard a trifle tighter—it seemed that her heart was just one notch closer to disintegration.

"Julia stays," she sobbed. "You gave Julia to your Tamea—yes, you did—you did—*you did!*"

Suddenly, impelled by what cosmic force he knew not, Dan Pritchard made his decision and with it precipitated upon his defenseless head a swarm of troubles. "Excuse me, dear Mrs. Pippy," he said gently. "I am sorry to have to veto your decision, which I trust is not an unalterable one. Julia—confound her Celtic skin—stays!"

Mrs. Pippy bowed her silvery head with the utmost composure and swept magnificently from the room; Tamea raised her tear-stained face from Dan's breast, took a Pritchard ear in each hand, drew his face down to hers and rewarded him for his fearless stand with a somewhat moist and fervent kiss. Maisie, watching the tableau composedly, felt a sharp, sudden stab of resentment against Tamea—or was it jealousy?

"Well, that's settled," she remarked dryly, and Dan sensed the sting.

He looked at his watch. "Got to be going down to the office," he mumbled, presenting the first excuse for escape that came to his mind. His anxious glance searched Maisie's blue eyes in vain for that humorous glint that had marked them when he first entered the room. "Please help me, Maisie," he murmured appealingly. "I've got my hands full."

Maisie nodded. "I'll try to undo the mischief, Dan. By the way, Uncle John told me something this morn-

ing that you ought to know. He's up to his silly eyebrows in the rice market."

"The double-crossing old idiot! I had begun to suspect he was up to some skull-duggery. I was on his trail and would have smoked him out in a day or two."

"I imagine that is why he told Auntie and me about it. He wanted me to break the news to you, I think."

Dan's head hung low on his breast—the sad Abraham Lincoln look was in his face and in his troubled eyes. Tamea, looking up at him very soberly now, read the distress which, momentarily, he could not conceal; in a sudden burst of sympathy her arm started to curve around his neck.

"Oh, stop it, stop it, Tamea!" Maisie cried sharply. "Mr. Pritchard is not accustomed to such intimate personal attentions from comparative strangers."

Tamea drew away from Dan quickly.

"Dress yourself!" Maisie commanded. "Julia, help her. Dan, run along and try not to worry."

Tamea's eyes flashed, but nevertheless she sat down and when Julia handed her a pair of black silken hose she commenced dutifully to draw them on.

"Much obliged for the tip, Maisie. I'll start a riot in Casson and Pritchard's office this very day. By the way, I think Mrs. Pippy is on her high horse. Please try to wheedle her down."

"Mrs. Pippy has resigned, Dan."

"The deuce she has; how do you know?"

"Why, any woman of spirit would."

He pondered this.

"Oh, well, let her go if she wants to. She's scarcely human at times. Well, if she insists upon leaving I'll give her a year's salary in advance. . . . Damnation. . . . Good morning, Maisie, dear. Please try to reason with—the sundry females about this house. . . . Tamea, I go to my office. Be a good girl."

"You are my father and my mother," she replied humbly. "I will kiss you farewell." And she did it.

"This primitive young witch has been in this house less than twenty-four hours and already she has kissed that defenseless man twice in my presence. I have known Dan all my life—and I have kissed him but once," Maisie thought.

The stab of resentment, of jealousy, perhaps, was more poignant this time; in addition Maisie was just a little bit peeved at the ease with which Tamea had achieved her victory.

Maisie had sufficient imagination to understand why Tamea, daughter of a thousand despots, with the instinct to rule complicated by the desire, must be excused for precipitating the clash with Mrs. Pippy. But what Maisie could also understand very clearly, since she too was a woman, was that Tamea, by the grace of her sex and her shameless effrontery in using every wile of that sex, was likely to become absolute master of Dan Pritchard's establishment. The man

was helpless before her. Maisie permitted a challenging gleam in the glance which she now bent upon Tamea.

Tamea intercepted that glance and interpreted it correctly. It was as if Maisie had heliographed to her: "Young lady, you've got a fight on your hands." Without an instant's hesitation Tamea's smoky orbs acknowledged the message and flashed back the reply: "Very well. I accept the challenge."

Then Maisie smiled, and Tamea, with hot resentment in her heart, smiled back.

CHAPTER X

DAN left his home with the alacrity of one who seeks escape from a most uncomfortable situation. As a bachelor he was conscious of the fact that this morning there had been four women too many in his life. He cringed from the prospect of having Mrs. Pippy resign his service in a huff. He hoped she would, under Maisie's cogent reasoning, consent to make allowances for Tamea until Maisie should have impressed upon the latter the fact that in a white democracy a South Sea Island queen was expected to be seen and not heard.

"Tamea is such a child," Dan told himself. "And a spoiled child at that. Old Gaston has permitted her to do exactly as she pleased, and now the task of correcting that mistake is mine. It isn't going to be an easy task, and what's more I haven't the slightest idea where to commence and where to stop. . . . What fragrant hair she has . . . such an appealing creature. When she weeps she's just a broken-hearted little girl . . . makes me want to take her on my knee and soothe her. . . .

"Maisie's nose went up a trifle the first time the

child kissed me, and there was steel in her voice when she reproved Tamea. Fine state of affairs if she and Tamea fail to hit it off together and Tamea elects to use me as a club to hurt Maisie. I have a feeling it would be like her to try! Come to think of it, most women would! As soon as Tamea has adjusted herself to her new life, I'll pack her off to some select school."

He picked up the annunciator and ordered Graves to halt alongside the first newsstand he could find. Thus presently he found himself with half a dozen magazines, skimming through their advertising pages in search of some hint of the most advantageous school for girls of Tamea's sort. Preferably the school should be situated in the center of a boundless prairie; as an additional safeguard, it should be surrounded by a very tall barbed-wire fence or a cactus hedge and sans communication with the outside world.

By the time Graves had deposited him on the sidewalk before his office building the problem of the right school was as far from solution as ever, and a growing resentment against Gaston of the Beard was rising in Dan's heart. Down under the Southern Cross the problem of living was an easy one. Why, then, had Gaston transplanted this girl to a land where the problem was so complicated—where she was so certain to add to the complications?

"I feel tremendous events portending," Dan solilo-

quized. "The very foundations of my life are tottering."

On his desk he found a memorandum from his secretary to the effect that he was to call Miss Morrison at his home the moment he came in.

"Hello, Dan'l!" Maisie's voice carried a triumphant note that cheered him wonderfully. "I merely wanted to relieve your mind of your domestic worries before you crossed swords with Uncle John. I have had a talk with Mrs. Pippy and she will remain—for the present at least."

"I'll raise her monthly stipend very materially," he answered gratefully. "Have you talked to Tamea?"

"No, but I shall, Dan. I realize the precise proportions of the predicament your generous acceptance of a white man's burden has placed you in. So, my dear, I dare say I shall have to stand at thy right hand and hold the bridge with thee."

"God bless you for that, Maisie. I think Tamea is a wonderfully affectionate girl—fiery, but generous, loyal and grateful, but hard to handle. She must be appealed to through her heart rather than her head."

"You don't know anything about it, Dan." Maisie rather bit that sentence off short. "That's her plan for ruling you—via your soft heart and your softer head. The girl Tamea has brains, she can reason and she can understand, and the instant she realizes that your words of wisdom are about to undermine her op-

position to your desires, she will make a flying leap for your manly breast——"

"Do you really think she might develop such a habit?"

"Dan, she's a fully developed woman——"

"Don't build me a mare's nest, Maisie. She's just a little girl."

"Have it your way. But I warn you she's the sort of little girl that a respectable bachelor cannot afford to have around his house a day longer than is quite necessary. That sounds catty, Dan, but I know whereof I speak."

"Yes, I suppose I'll have to do something radical and do it quickly," he agreed. "Thank you, Maisie—a million thanks."

"Happy to be of service to you, old boy."

"Maisie! Will you accord me another favor?"

"Certainly. What is it?"

"Consider yourself duly and affectionately kissed."

"Oh! Dan, you're developing a habit. But don't you think two kisses are quite sufficient to start the day with?"

"That was a little mean feminine jab, Maisie. Good-by. I'm going to hang up."

He did, albeit smiling and much relieved. He could now turn to the task of standing old John Casson on the latter's snowy head, so to speak, and see how much rice would run out of his pockets.

Experience had taught Dan that the best way to handle his partner was to rough him from the start, for, like all weak and pompous men, Casson was not superabundantly endowed with courage or the ability to think fast and clearly under fire. He would fight defensively but never offensively, and Dan had discovered the great fundamental truth that the offensive generally wins, the defensive never.

He summoned his secretary. "Miss Mather, please inform Mr. Casson that I desire to confer with him—in my office—immediately."

As he had anticipated, old Casson obeyed him without question.

"Well, boy, what have you got on your mind this morning?" he began genially.

"Rice," Dan answered curtly. "Sit down."

Casson walked to the window, looked out over the vista of bay and commenced thinking as rapidly as he could under the circumstances.

"I told you to sit down," Dan reminded him crisply. "I mean it. Sit down and face me. I want to look into your face and smoke the deception out of it."

"By the gods of war, I'll not stand such talk from any man!" Old Casson had decided to bluster.

Dan glowered at him. "You'll stand it from me. You've got some rice deals on in this crazy market and you've kept the news of your operations from me. Have you speculated any in coffee or sugar?"

"No, no, Dan. Nothing but rice."

"What sort of rice have you committed us to—California or Oriental?"

"Both."

"Playing alone or in a pool?"

"Alone."

"How much California rice have you purchased?"

"One million sacks."

"Paid for any of it?"

"Half of it. Balance in sixty days."

"Where is the rice?"

"Scattered in various warehouses throughout the upper Sacramento valley."

"I didn't notice that our bank account had been particularly depleted during the month I was in Hawaii. You bought the rice on open credit, hypothecated the warehouse receipts with various banks, paid for half the rice with the proceeds and used the remainder of the loan to pyramid with. I suppose you sunk that in a little jag of Philippine rice."

"I did," Casson admitted, flushed and anxious. He had seated himself, facing Dan.

"Holding your warehoused rice for a rising market, eh?"

"Exactly."

"Suppose the bottom drops out?"

Casson shrugged and for the first time smiled. "I think, Pritchard, you'll have to admit that I've put

one over on you this time, and what's more, you're going to like it. I bought that California rice at prices ranging from nine and a quarter to ten and a half cents per pound, and today it is worth twenty. We stand to clean up a hundred thousand dollars on that lot alone."

"We are engaged in legitimate business, not food profiteering. Can you dispose of that million sacks readily?"

"Had an offer of twenty cents for it this morning."

"Reliable people?"

"Rated up to five million, A-A-A-one."

"Cash?"

"No, ninety days."

"Suspicious. Don't like ninety-day paper. The banks are beginning to discriminate in their loans. All over the country there has been a wide expansion of credit in all lines, due to war-time prosperity, and my guess is that the demand for credit will soon result in the usual banking situation. The banks will discover that their loans have so increased as to be out of proportion to their reserves and deposits; and if the banks once get frightened, business will be crippled overnight."

"Pooh, no danger of that for a couple of years yet, Pritchard."

"On that subject I prefer sounder advice than yours, Mr. Casson. Call up the people who want that

rice and tell them we're willing to cut our price considerably if they will pay cash."

"Sorry, but it can't be done, my boy. I've already traded on a ninety-day basis. Don't worry. We're perfectly safe."

"With you, the wish is father to the thought. How much Oriental rice have you bought?"

"We've got the British steamer Malayan loading a cargo of eight thousand tons in Manila, for Havana, Cuba. On or about the middle of next month the steamer Chinook will load four thousand tons at Shanghai, for delivery at Havana."

"Our specialty, of which we have a good, safe, working knowledge, is South Sea products—mostly copra, and the operation of ships. The shoemaker should stick to his last. Now, then, listen to my ultimatum. If the sun sets today and leaves Casson and Pritchard the proprietors of rice stored anywhere except in our respective kitchens, you and I are going to dissolve partnership about an hour after the sun rises tomorrow. And, whether you realize it or not, the moment our partnership is dissolved, that moment you start tobogganing to ruin."

Casson rose and stretched himself carelessly. "Oh, well, boy," he replied, the patronizing quality of his words driving Dan into a silent fury, "suppose we leave the crossing of our bridges until we come to them."

Dan's fist smashed down on his desk with a thud

that caused old Casson and the inkwell to jump simultaneously. "We'll cross our bridges today," he roared, "and we'll start now. Sit down, you consummate old jackass!"

Casson trembled, paled and sat down very abruptly. "My dear Dan, control yourself," he stammered.

"I'll control myself, never fear. My chief job is controlling you. How dare you commit me to ruin without consulting me?"

"Ruin? Ridiculous! Only a fool would have neglected this golden opportunity—and I'm the senior member of this firm and a sixty percent owner in it." Simulating righteous indignation, Casson too commenced to pound Dan's desk.

"No bluffs!" Dan ordered, and took down the intercommunicating office telephone. The chief clerk responded. "Bring to me immediately all of the data pertaining to Mr. Casson's rice operations," he ordered. He hung up and faced Casson. "That will be all, Mr. Casson. From this moment you are out of the rice market and I'm in it. I'll attend to the marketing of more rice than this firm is worth."

"Pritchard, I forbid this!"

"Very well." Dan reached for his hat. "I'm going up to our banker and tell him all about your rice deals. A business man should be as frank with his banker as with his lawyer. You'll get your orders from the man

higher up. If a loss threatens us, I prefer to have the blow fall now."

The battle was over. "Oh, have it your own way, my boy!" Casson cried disgustedly and with a wave of his plump hand absolved himself from any and all disasters that might overtake the firm.

Half an hour later a well-known rice broker appeared in Dan's office in response to the latter's telephoned request.

"This firm," Dan announced, "owns eight thousand tons of rice now loading for Havana, in Manila. It owns four thousand tons due to be loaded in thirty days at Shanghai. Is that rice quickly salable?"

"How soon do you want it sold?"

"Immediately."

"Can do—at a price."

"Do it!" Dan Pritchard commanded. "And if you can dig me up a cash customer—at a cent or two under the market—I'll pay you an extra quarter of one per cent commission."

"Cash, eh? Well, that's a bit doubtful. However, that extra commission will make me work. I'll report when I have something you can get your teeth into."

"May I hope to hear from you today?"

"Scarcely. The market's a bit off—somewhat sluggish. Trading has been pretty rapid of late, and the opinion prevails in some quarters that the market has about reached the point of saturation."

"Many traders unloading?"

"Oh, no! Everybody is still holding on for a further rise in price, which I personally believe will come. We're all optimists in the rice market."

"Well, I'm a pessimist, but only because I do not care for rice. I have never dealt in it before and I don't know anything about the rice market. Frankly, I'm closing out some trades of Mr. Casson's under his protest. My instructions to you are practically to throw Casson's trades overboard in order to get us out of the rice market."

The broker eyed him keenly. "No necessity for getting stampeded and breaking the market," he suggested.

The remainder of that day Dan devoted to Tamea's business. First he went to the Appraisers' Building and declared the pearls which Gaston had smuggled in on the Moorea. Having paid the duty on them, he called on the leading jewelers and had them appraised again, after which he added ten per cent to the appraisal value and sold the entire lot to a wholesale jeweler for cash. He reasoned, very wisely, that at the height of a period of such prosperity as the country had not hitherto known, the selected pearls of Gaston of the Beard would never bring a better price. He then deposited all of her funds to the credit of "Daniel Pritchard, guardian of Tamea Oluolu Larrieau, a minor," in a number of savings banks. He

next called upon his attorney, who drew up, at his request a formal petition to the Superior Court for letters of guardianship for Tamea.

Yes, Dan was a practical business man, a slave to the accepted forms. He was taking his office as Tamea's guardian so very seriously that his position was analogous to that of the man who failed to see the woods because of the trees. It did not occur to him that the administration of an estate for a minor who knew nothing of the value of money and cared less, who had never known discipline and who yielded instantly to every elemental human desire and instinct, might be provocative of much distress and loss of sleep to him. On the contrary, what he did do was to return to his office hugely satisfied with the world as at that moment constituted.

CHAPTER XI

AT four o'clock Dan telephoned his home and ascertained from Sooey Wan that Tamea and Maisie had gone out together.

He decided, therefore, to return to his office and look over the mail; perchance he might find there some comforting light on the rice situation.

As he came into the general office his secretary called to him that Mr. Mellenger was in his office, waiting to see him; that he had been waiting there since one o'clock.

Dan nodded comprehendingly and walked into the ambuscade. Mellenger was seated in Dan's chair. He had his feet up on the window sill and in his left hand he held a cigar.

"Well, old horse thief," he murmured with lazy cordiality, "you've given me quite a wait. Have you told the story to any other newspaper?"

"What story, you fat parasite?"

"Romantic skipper, leprosy, suicide, lovely half-caste daughter of royal blood, to be adopted by well-known young business man of highest social standing. Where is her photograph, and if no photo be available,

where is she?" He touched with his toe a camera on the floor beside him. "Great story," he continued. "Front page stuff. Got to give it a spread."

"I could spread your nose for news all over your impudent countenance," Dan retorted irritably. "There must be no publicity on this matter, Mel!"

"Got to be, my son. The doctor of the public health service who examined your shipmaster yesterday boarded the Moorea this morning to remove the man to quarantine, and was informed by the mate that the leprous one had gone over the rail and failed to come up. That doctor suspects Larrieau has escaped —and you know they can't afford to have a leper running around on the loose. All the water front reporters have part of the story from the doctor and part from old Casson and they're satisfied with that, but I'm here to get the facts."

"I understand you've been here since one o'clock."

Mellenger nodded. "My day off, Dan, but the city editor knew how close you and I have always been, so he called me up at my hotel and asked me to get the story."

"Call him up and tell him that I decline to be interviewed."

"Sorry, but I must interview you. I've already interviewed by telephone old Casson, Miss Morrison, Mrs. Pippy, Julia, Sooey Wan and Graves. The crew of the Moorea I have seen personally. I've got a cracker-

jack story but I want a better one. Sooey Wan said he thought you'd marry the queen about a week from tomorrow."

"That Chink is absolutely out of control."

"You leave him alone. He's a friend of mine. And you'll be interviewed!" He puffed at his cigar and looked sorrowfully out over the roofs of the city. "Only one way to handle a newspaper man," he ruminated. "Receive him, ignore him or kill him. Ah, to be rich and beloved by a queen—to dwell in marble halls, with vassals and serfs rendering snappy service!"

"Mel, don't be an ass. Don't insist upon injecting a romantic note into this story."

"Sooey Wan says he'll back her against the field at a hundred to one, and any time Sooey has a celestial hunch I'll play it."

"Mel, you shouldn't discuss my private affairs with my servants——"

The knight of the pad and pencil waved him into silence. "Sooey Wan isn't a servant, Dan. He's an institution who accepts a hundred and fifty dollars a month from you just to please you and perpetuate the institution. Why shouldn't the old idol discuss you with me? Haven't I been dining at your house every Thursday night for ten years? Sooey Wan knows I think almost as much of you as he does. Come, I'm listening."

In five minutes the tale was told.

"Her photograph," Mellenger insisted.

"You cannot have it."

"One of the crew—by name Kahanaha—found this one for me in the late skipper's desk," the imperturbable Mellenger informed him, and produced a photograph of Tamea, hibiscus-crowned, barefooted, garbed in a dotted calico Mother Hubbard.

"Hideous as death," Dan growled and snatched at it.

But Mellenger whisked it away. "It is, as you say, hideous, but if no other photograph is available we shall be forced regretfully to use it. Woodley, of the Chronicle, has one like it, but I know I can prevail upon him to hand it back for something more recent and not so colorful."

"He shall have it."

"You understood I couldn't permit Woodley to scoop me on the photograph."

There was a knock at the door and Miss Mather entered. "Miss Morrison and Miss Larrieau are in the general office, asking to see you, Mr. Pritchard."

"God is good and the devil not half bad," murmured Mellenger and picked up his camera. "Certainly, Miss Mather. Admit the ladies, by all means."

To Dan he said: "I've always wished I might live to see a queen enter a room. Tall, stately, majestic, coldly beautiful, they sweep through the door with a long undulating stride—Judas priest!"

"*Chéri!* Look at me, Dan." From the door, violently flung open, Tamea's golden voice challenged his admiration. For one breathless instant she stood, alert, seemingly poised for flight, a glorious creature gloriously garbed, her arms held toward him, beseeching his approval; the next she was rushing to him, to fling those arms around his neck and implant a chaste salute upon each cheek.

She thrust him from her, ignored Mellenger and struck a pose.

"There, dear one," she pleaded, "is your Tamea, then, so much uglier than the women of your own race?"

"You are perfectly glorious, Tamea."

"As the aurora borealis," Mellenger spoke up.

Tamea, seemingly not aware of his presence until now, turned upon him eyes which frankly sought a confirmation of the enthusiasm and pride she read in Dan's. "You like me, too?"

"Queen, you're adorable."

He glanced past her to Maisie Morrison, standing, flushed and faintly smiling, in the doorway. Maisie was gazing with an eager intensity at Dan Pritchard, who saw her not. Mellenger twitched the tail of Dan's coat, and the latter, as if summoned out of a trance, turned and gazed at him inquiringly.

"Introduce me, fool, introduce me!" Mellenger suggested, and Dan complied.

Maisie acknowledged the introduction with a cordial

nod and a weary little smile, but Tamea thrust out her long, beautiful hand. "How do you do, Mr. Mel. How are all your people? Very well, I hope." She swung around to give him a view of her from the back.

"Marvelous," he declared. "Your Majesty is so beautiful I must make a picture of you at once."

With the adroitness of his profession he set his camera up on the telephone stand, posed Tamea where the late afternoon sun shone through the window and photographed her half a dozen times; then, with a promise to Tamea to send her prints, he bowed himself out to have the films developed and write his story.

Dan in the meantime had provided seats for both his visitors.

"So that's Mark Mellenger," said Maisie. "I wish he had stayed longer. I have a curiosity to know anybody who loves you, Dan."

"Old Mel is the salt of the earth," he declared warmly. "When we were in college together he was editor of the college daily and I was by way of being a cartoonist. In those days we were the heroes of the campus, and thoughtless enthusiasts used to predict for each of us the prompt acquisition of a niche in the Hall of Fame. Mel was to write the great American novel and I was to create riots among millionaires anxious to buy my pictures." He shrugged ruefully, nor did he note Maisie's wistful smile as he turned to

the radiant Tamea. "I'll paint you, you tropical goddess," he soliloquized audibly. "You've had a fine time in the shops today, eh, my dear?"

"It was very wonderful, Dan Pritchard."

Dan turned to Maisie. "You're so good and kind, Maisie, and your taste is always so exquisite. In this instance it is more than exquisite. It is exotic."

"I cannot claim credit for it, Dan. All I did was bring Tamea to the best shops. What she is wearing is entirely of her own selection."

"But, Maisie, how could she?"

"You forget that Tamea is half French. She has been born with a positive genius for artistic adornment."

He and Tamea exchanged approving smiles. "And is our Tamea an extravagant girl?" he queried.

"Tamea," said Maisie bluntly, "would bankrupt Midas."

"For money," quoth Tamea, "I care not that much!" She snapped her fingers. "But why should I love money? Is money not to be used to make men happy and women beautiful in the eyes of their men, that they may hold them against other women?"

"I suppressed your ward's spending frenzy as well as I could, Dan, but nevertheless we spent nearly two thousand dollars."

Dan came close to Maisie. He had noticed for the first time how tired she looked; in her weariness he de-

tected a wistfulness and a repression that told him Maisie's patience had been sorely tried. "I suspect your work today has required all that you had of fortitude and courage, Maisie." He pinched her pale cheek and then patted the spot he had pinched. "You're a great comfort to me, Maisie."

"Well, that helps, Dan. I think if Tamea had not been permitted to dash home with her purchases, array herself in fine raiment and return here to dazzle you, the day would have been quite spoiled for her. The excitement has been good for her, I think. She has not had time to grieve for her father."

"My father dwells happily in Paliuli with my mother. I will not grieve for him again. I will live now to be happy."

"And make others happy, too, dear?" Maisie suggested.

"*Certainement!* But first I must know others and learn how to make them happy."

"We will be patient and teach you, Tamea. By the way, Dan, it's time to close down your desk, isn't it? I'll leave Tamea to you now until you need me again."

She gave him her hand and he noticed it was very cold.

"Poor old dear," he whispered as he escorted her into the hall. "I've an idea you've had the very devil of a day."

"Naturally. I went shopping with an imp, didn't I?"

He raised his extra high eyebrow a trifle higher. "Is she very hard to manage?"

"She is."

"Any hope at all?"

"I'm afraid I'm not a fair judge, Dan. Every little while she grows impulsively angelic. She doesn't like me a bit, yet today, after my maid Céleste had come over and done the imp's hair, Tamea assured me I was very sweet and kissed me. She has a perfect passion for having her own way."

"I'll have to be firm with her, Maisie."

"Don't be humorous, Dan. In her hands you are as clay."

"Nonsense! She's just a simple child of nature. With tactful handling——"

Maisie was suddenly furious. "Oh, you're such a helpless, lovable booby! You are the one man in this world whom Providence has selected as the rightful receiver of gold bricks. Why did you take on this frightful responsibility? Wouldn't it have been far simpler and less expensive to have urged upon her father the wisdom of sending her back to her outlandish island to queen it over the cannibals instead of——"

"Instead of whom, Maisie?"

"Instead of setting your little world by the ears? You just cannot begin to imagine the terrific time I had inducing Mrs. Pippy to remain."

"Deuce take Mrs. Pippy!" he protested. "She ought to thank her lucky stars for the chance to remain. The first time she met Tamea she looked down her nose at the child——"

"What you do not seem to comprehend, Dan, is that Tamea is *not* a child."

"Well, Maisie, all I've got to say is that whether Tamea be a child or a woman, an imp or an angel, I promised her father I'd look after her, and I'm going to do it. If she refuses to be directed, if she declines to be obedient, I'll——"

"Yes, you'll——"

"You do not like her, Maisie?"

"Oh, I do not dislike her. She merely startles me. She is such a flashy, exotic, alien sort of person, voicing whatever thoughts pop into her head, and with the most extraordinary ideas and outlook on life. She told me all about an Englishman in Riva who was madly in love with her. He was a drunken profligate, and she would have none of him because he was dull and stupid, not because he was such an out-and-out scoundrel. She speaks of sinful people as impersonally as we would of some unfortunate who has measles or tuberculosis." He laughed. "I suppose you realize, Dan, that to keep Tamea in your home hereafter will be to invite gossip and criticism from those who do not know you so well as we do."

"But what shall I do with the girl?"

"Send her to a hotel or a convent," was Maisie's suggestion.

"Very well, Maisie. You spoke of a convent. That's a splendid idea. A convent's the very place for Tamea. I wonder where I might find a good one."

Maisie brightened perceptibly. "I'll look one up for you."

She gave him her hand and he pressed it tenderly. "You're mighty sweet," he murmured. "I do appreciate you tremendously. Good night, dear."

Instantly there was in her face a flash of the Maisie of yesterday, the light he had seen there when he kissed her. "Good night, booby," she whispered. "Think of me once in a while."

"I think of you more frequently than that."

"I'm glad."

"You nuisance! You interfere with my conduct of business."

"I rejoice in my mendacity. You might walk to the elevator with me, Dan."

He did, and they talked there five minutes longer before Maisie finally left him.

CHAPTER XII

MEANWHILE, back in Dan's office, the childishly curious Tamea had started a critical inspection of the room. She looked in the wash closet, turned on the water, inspected the books in the bookcase and the model of a clipper ship on top of it, and presently discovered on the side of Dan's desk a row of push buttons. She touched one of these and almost immediately Dan's secretary, Miss Mather, entered the office. She glanced around and failing to see Pritchard, she said:

"You called me?"

Tamea shook her head and Miss Mather excused herself and retired. Instantly Tamea pressed another button, and to her amazement a youth of about sixteen summers entered, gazed around the room and said:

"Yes'm. Whadja want? Me?"

Tamea solemnly shook her head and the youth departed, mystified, leaving her with a delightful sense of occult power. She tried another button, and some thirty seconds later a bald-headed man, the chief clerk, entered very deferentially.

"Ha! ha!" Tamea laughed. "Nothing doing, Monsieur, nothing, I assure."

The chief clerk retired, registering amazement, and Tamea adventured with the fourth button, this time without result. So she turned her attention to the telephone switch box and commenced pressing buttons and ringing bells all over the suite of Casson and Pritchard, with the result that everybody was trying to answer his telephone at once. Impelled by curiosity, Tamea picked up the receiver just in time to hear a tiny voice say very distinctly: "Hello! Hello! Casson speaking."

With a shriek she dropped the receiver. Here, indeed, was magic. Trembling and white, she pressed all four push buttons in succession, and again Miss Mather entered.

"It speaks," Tamea gasped. "There are devils in this house. *Regardez!*"

Miss Mather saw the dangling telephone receiver and replaced it on the hook. "It is silent now. The devil is dumb," she assured Tamea. "Have you never seen a telephone before?"

"But no, never. And I press here—and here—and servants come without a summons. This is proof that Monsieur Dan Pritchard is indeed a great chief."

"He is a very kind chief, at any rate. We all love him here."

Tamea stared at Miss Mather disapprovingly. "I have heard that he is much beloved by women." She frowned. "You may go," she decreed.

Miss Mather, highly amused, retired. At the door she found the office boy, the chief clerk and Dan Pritchard about to enter, and explained to them the reason for the excitement. Dan entered, chuckling.

"You laugh!" Tamea challenged him haughtily.

"Yes, and I laugh at you."

"Is that—what shall I say—very nice, very polite?"

"No, but I can't help it. However, I'll be fair with you, Tamea. You may laugh at me whenever you desire."

"I shall never desire to laugh at you, Dan."

"Forgive me, my dear." He got his hat and overcoat from the closet. "We will go home now, Tamea."

She took hold of his hand and walked with him thus out through the general office and down the hall. He was slightly embarrassed and wished that she would let go his hand, but he dared not suggest it. During the swift drop in the elevator Tamea gasped, quivered and clung tightly to his arm. When the car reached the lobby and the passengers made their exit, the girl retreated into the corner and dragged Dan with her.

"We get out here, Tamea."

"I know, dear one. But I like this. It is a longer and swifter fall than when the stern of a schooner drops down a heavy sea. I would rise once more."

"Oh, come, Tamea! This is nonsense. One does not ride in an elevator unless one has to."

"Is a second ride, then, forbidden by this man?" She indicated the elevator operator.

"No, you may ride up and down all day if you desire. But it's so silly, Tamea."

"In this country men fear they may be thought foolish. But you are a brave man. You will not deny your Tamea this simple pleasure." He frowned. "Very well. I obey."

Tamea started for the door; but Dan pressed her back into the corner again; the elevator operator favored him with a knowing grin and the car shot upward without a pause to the fifteenth floor. . . .

When they were settled in the limousine the girl reached again for his hand and possessed herself of it. "I think I shall be very happy with you," she confided.

He reflected that Tamea would always be happy if given free rein to her desires. Aloud he said: "Tamea, it is my duty to make you happy."

Gratefully she cuddled his hand to her cheek and implanted upon it a fervent kiss.

"Of course," she agreed. "*Certainement.*"

They rolled out Market Street through the heavy evening traffic, and presently were climbing to the crest of Twin Peaks. As the car swept around the last curve and gave a view of the city from the Potrero to the Cliff House snuggled below them, Tamea gasped. A little wisp of fog was creeping in the Golden Gate, but the light, still lingering although the sun had almost

set, clothed the city in an amethyst haze that softened its ugly architecture and made of it a thing of superlative beauty. The sweep of blue bay, the islands and the shipping, the departing light heliographed from the western windows of homes on the Alameda County shore, the high green hills on the eastern horizon, all combined to make a picture so impressively beautiful that Tamea, born with the appreciation of beauty so distinct a characteristic of her mother's race, sighed with the shock of it. Graves had stopped the car and the girl gazed her fill in silence.

"I wanted to bring you up here and prove to you that ours is not an ugly land, although not so beautiful perhaps as Riva," Dan explained.

Then they swept down the western slope of Twin Peaks, up the Great Highway along the Pacific shore and home through Golden Gate Park. As was his custom, Dan opened the front door with his latchkey and he and Tamea stepped into the hall.

"You have an hour in which to dress for dinner, child," he told her. "Ring for Julia. She will help you."

The girl came close to him, drew his head down on her shoulder and pressed her lips to his ear.

"Yesterday," she whispered, "was a day of sorrow. It did not seem that I could bear it. But today has been so joyous I have almost forgotten my sorrow;

in a week it will be quite gone. To you I am indebted for this great happiness."

She kissed him rapturously, first on one cheek, then on the other, and Dan reflected that this Gallic form of osculation had evidently been learned from old Gaston of the Beard. How warm and soft her lips were, how fragrant her breath and hair! In the dim light of the hall her marvelous eyes beamed up at him with a light that suddenly set his pulse to pounding wildly. A tremor ran through him.

"You tremble, dear one," the girl whispered. "You are cold! Ah, but my love shall warm," and she lifted her lips to his.

She was Circe, born again. Decidedly, here was dangerous ground. He was far too intelligent not to realize the complication that might ensue should he yield to this sudden gust of desire, this strange new yearning never felt before, this impulse for possession without passion, that shook his very soul. He told himself he must continue to play a part, to decline to take her otherwise than paternally, to evade, at all hazard, the pitfall yawning before him.

"It is not well to think too long or too hard," Tamea whispered. "Your people count the costs, but mine do not."

Apparently the amazing creature knew of what he was thinking! He was cornered, he would have to escape and that quickly. "I was just thinking, Tamea,

that my house will be lonely after your bright presence," he said, a trifle unsteadily.

She gasped. "You plan to send me from you, Dan Pritchard?"

"Temporarily, my dear. In spring the climate of this part of California is too cold and raw for you. Tomorrow you and Julia and Mrs. Pippy will go in the car to Del Monte, where it is more like your own country. After you have been there a month and have grown accustomed to our ways, you will go to a convent to be educated."

She stood with her hands on his shoulders, pondering this. Then: "This is your desire?"

"Yes."

She looked into the very soul of him. "I do not believe that," she declared and looked up at him so wistfully that his reason tottered on its throne and fell, crashing, into the valley of his desire. He crushed her to him and their lips met. . . .

Out of the semi-darkness a familiar voice spoke. "Captain's girl velly nice. What Sooey Wan tell you, boss? Now you ketchum heap savvy."

Dan Pritchard fled upstairs, leaving the triumphant Tamea to follow at her leisure. "Fool, fool!" The voice of conscience beat in his brain.

"That wasn't kind of me . . . no, not even sensible. . . . I've spoiled everything . . . Maisie. . . .

Why wasn't I man enough to be strong? . . . Gaston entrusted her to me and I've failed. . . ."

As he reached the door of his room Tamea's voice floated up the stairway. She was singing a pæan of triumph, and she sang it in her mother tongue. Ah, youth and love and golden dreams! In Tamea's heart there was no longer room for sorrow, in her primitive but wonderfully acute intelligence there was no room for disturbing reflections touching the whys and wherefores which, in Dan Pritchard's world, were concomitant with all decisions and made the wisdom of all issues doubtful.

"She is exotic—overpowering, like a seductive perfume. She appeals profoundly, in her solitary state, to my sympathy; her beauty, her vitality, her unspoiled and innocent outlook, the impulsiveness and naturalness of her desire, in which, from her viewpoint, there is nothing to criticize, all conspire to drive me into the very situation I would avoid because I know it to be ruinous. 'East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet.' Kipling knew. When they do meet it is only an illusion of meeting, and the illusion fades. And yet, from the moment that girl first gazed upon me, Maisie has been receding farther and farther from my conscious mind. An incredibly bad compliment to Maisie, and the deuce of it is I think that, subconsciously, Maisie realizes this. What a cad I have been!"

Julia knocked at his door. "Miss Morrison on the 'phone, sir."

He went into the hall and took down the receiver. "Yes, Maisie."

"Dan, dear," Maisie replied, almost breathlessly, "would you think me very forward if I were to invite myself to dinner at your house tonight?"

"Indeed I would not! As a matter of fact, Maisie, I very much desire your presence at dinner tonight. I wasn't quite aware of this desire until you spoke, but I think that in about five minutes the same bright idea would have occurred to me."

"Uncle John came home in an ill humor. Scolded me all the way up and complained to me about you, and of course that put me in a bad temper——"

"Why have your dinner spoiled by being forced to sit and listen to your avuncular relative rave? Shall I send my car for you?"

"Do, please!" A silence. Then: "You're quite sure you would have telephoned and invited me to dinner if I had not telephoned and invited myself?"

"Positive, Maisie. I'm at a loose end. I need your moral support. My duties as a foster father——"

"I understand. I thought too, Dan, it might relieve you of your embarrassment if the school or convent question could be settled tonight. I've been doing some thinking and am prepared to submit a plan."

"Good news! Graves will call for you at seven

o'clock. And by the way, my oldest and dearest man friend, Mark Mellenger, is coming. You met him in the office this afternoon."

"Good! Is he interesting, Dan?"

"The Lord made but one Mellenger and then the plates were destroyed. He dines with me every Thursday night he is in town. He's a newspaper man and Thursday is his day off. He celebrates it with me. Women have never appeared to interest Mel, and I'm looking forward to watching the effect on him of two extremes in interesting and charming women."

"So Tamea has grown up—so soon," Maisie challenged. Then she added, while he searched his puzzled mind for an answer: "Thank you so much for asking me over, Dan. Until a quarter past seven, then. Good-by, booby!"

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN Dan came downstairs he found Mark Mellenger seated before the fire in the living room. Sooey Wan stood before him, vigorously shaking a cocktail mixer and discussing volubly with the newspaper man some inside facts concerning the latest tong war in Chinatown.

"Hello, here come boss. Hello, boss. How my boy tonight, eh? Velly happy, eh?" Thus Sooey Wan, his idol face wreathed in a smile that indicated his entire satisfaction with the world as at that moment constituted. Dan glared at him, for he knew the thought uppermost in that curious Oriental mind; Sooey Wan assimilated the hint but continued to grin and giggle. Mellenger stood up.

"I drink success to your administration of your new job," he said.

"It's a perfectly horrible job, Mel, and nothing but woe can come out of it. Keeping pace with Tamea is a real chore."

"Would that the gods had favored me with her father's faith and friendship. Dan, that girl is as glorious as a tropical sunset."

"I thought something had happened to you, Mel.

So you're a casualty, eh? And in the name of the late Jehoshaphat, what do you mean by coming to my house in dinner clothes? I have never suspected you of owning dinner clothes."

"I am a very easy man to fit in ready-made clothing," his guest replied. "I bought these after leaving your office tonight. Made up my mind you'd be dining more or less formally."

"But my dear Mel, you might have known Tamea would not have considered you *de trop* if you had appeared for dinner in a suit of striped pajamas."

"No, but Miss Morrison would."

"What sorcery is this? I did not invite her until twenty minutes ago."

Mellenger drank his cocktail slowly and thoughtfully and held out his glass for Sooey Wan's further attention.

"I am not one of those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not. I'm a fairly good judge of human nature, and I always judge the characters of men and women—particularly women—the moment the sample is submitted. Which reminds me that for the first time I suspect you of a failure to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

"That's a definite charge. State your specification."

Mellenger's somewhat heavy, impassive face lighted humorously. "Now, didn't Miss Morrison invite herself?" he challenged.

Dan's mouth flew open in amazement. "Yes. How did you know?"

Mellenger sat down and gazed owlishly at the fire before replying: "I had a suspicion, amounting to a moral certainty, that she would. Usually, as you know, I am a careless fellow. I snatch quick meals in cheap restaurants and I work like a dog. Hence my one day of rest is devoted to rest, meditation and observation. Observation and subsequent meditation convinced me that Miss Morrison would be a guest here tonight."

"Remarkable man!"

"I had never had the privilege of meeting Miss Morrison before this afternoon," Mellenger continued. "A very striking, intelligent, splendid looking girl. She has brains and wit."

"How do you know? She spoke four words to you—'How do you do?'"

"She has eyes. Why have you delayed marrying her? You're a bit of a dodo, Dan."

"How do I know she'd marry me, Mel?"

"Because you do not know constitutes the basis for my charge that you're a bit of a dodo. Anybody else would know." He looked up at Dan suddenly, his gray, deep-set eyes very earnest under shaggy brows. "Are you aware that this very excellent young woman is deeply in love with you?"

"No, I'm not."

Mellenger sighed. "Have you ever suspected she might be?"

"That sounds presumptuous, Mel. Of course, once in a while——"

"You have suspected it but have banished the suspicion. . . . You're very comfortable here; you're rich and getting richer; you have a yearning to chuck business one day and woo art." He stared again at the fire and sipped at his cocktail. "The victim of a suppressed artistic desire is loath to give hostages to fortune in the way of a wife and children. Good Lord, I've written a trunkful of short stories and novels that haven't sold; I have never been satisfied with one of them, and until I am satisfied I have planned to remain single and live in a hotel. . . . Everybody in town in your set knows how Maisie Morrison feels toward you. Your indifference constitutes a choice topic of conversation among the tea tabbies."

"You are a mine of information, Mel."

"I get it from our society editor. She knows all the gossip."

"Oh!"

"Ever consider marrying Miss Morrison, Dan?"

"Yes, I have."

"He who hesitates is lost, my friend."

Dan's face had suddenly gone haggard. "I must not hesitate," he murmured, "or I may be lost."

"Yes," Mellenger agreed coolly, "only in this case

suppose we substitute for the word *may* the word *shall*."

"Tamea?" asked Dan.

Mellenger nodded. "She is exotic, marvelous, irresistible—just the sort of woman to sweep an idealistic ass like you off his feet—into the abyss. Maisie Morrison knows that, and Tamea, young as she is, knows that Maisie Morrison knows it. This afternoon in your office your ward favored you with an impulsive, childish hug and kiss. That was a stab to the other girl. They exchanged swift glances. There was challenge in Maisie's and triumph and purpose in Tamea's."

"This is perfectly horrible, Mel."

"We-l-l, at any rate it's inconvenient and embarrassing. It would be horrible for Maisie to have to come to a realization that this half-caste islander had won you away from her—and it would be very horrible for you to arrive at the same realization after it was too late."

"But I entertain no such crazy intention."

"You don't know what intentions you *may* entertain. You may never truly fall in love with Tamea, but—you may become infatuated with her. She has a singularly potent lure for men—men who love beauty and fire and vitality—men who feel mentally crowded by a mediocre world. I have known such men, when infatuated, to sacrifice everything they valued in life for the transient favor of women who did not assay

very highly in mental or moral values. As a matter of fact, my boy, you are infatuated with Tamea already."

"How do you know?"

"I do not know how or why I know. I just know it, and now I am sure I know it. Forget it, Dan."

Pritchard's head sunk on his chest in the thoughtful, half sad posture that Maisie termed the Abraham Lincoln look. He sighed and said presently, "What should I do about it, Mel?"

"Get this girl out of your life at once and marry Maisie Morrison as soon as you can procure a license."

"I think that's very sound advice, Mel."

"I think so, too."

Mellenger drifted over to the piano and commenced playing very softly; the words of the song he played rang in Dan Pritchard's mind with something of the sad poignancy of the distant tolling of church bells:

Tow-see mon-ga-lay, my dear,
You'll leave me some day, I fear,
Sailing home across the sea
To blue-eyed girl in Melikee.
If you stay, I love you true,
If you leave me—no can do!
Me no cry, me only say
Tow-see mon-ga-lay.

"Yes"—Mellenger resumed the train of his thoughts —"my advice is eminently sound—but you'll not follow

it." The doorbell rang. "There's Maisie Morrison now, Dan."

"I shall ask her this very night to marry me, Mel."

"I think not, old-timer."

"You are a very wise man, Monsieur Mel."

Tamea spoke from the doorway and Dan, looking up startled, beheld her standing there, a thing of beauty, dazzling, glorious, shimmering, in a dinner gown of old rose that displayed her matchless figure to bewildering perfection. Her eyes, not flashing but softly luminous, were bent upon Dan Pritchard a little bit sadly, a little bit puzzled.

"I have been a stranger here, *chéri*," she said very distinctly, "but you have looked with favor upon your Tamea, Dan Pritchard—and we are strangers to each other no longer. You are my man. I love you, and though I die this Maisie shall not possess that which I love."

She crossed swiftly to Dan's side; as he sought to rise she drew him down in his chair again and pressed his head back to meet her glance as she bent over him, her arms around his neck. A silence, while she searched the soul of him. Then: "You do love your Tamea?"

Dan Pritchard murmured, "I don't know, Tamea."

"*Je t'adore!*" She patted his cheek. "I have no wish to hurt this Maisie," she informed him and with a glance included Mellenger in the confidence, "but that which I have, I hold."

"Exactly," said Mellenger and commenced to play again, softly and with devilish humor:

> The bells of hell go ting-a-ling,
> For you and not for me . . .

Dan sprang up and brushed Tamea aside as Julia appeared in the doorway.

"Miss Morrison," she announced.

As Maisie entered Mark Mellenger's heart almost skipped a beat. "She has accepted the challenge. Zounds! What a woman!" he thought, and stared at her in vast admiration as she advanced to meet Dan and carelessly gave him her hand—to kiss! As Dan bent his white face over it Tamea's voice shattered the silence.

"I think, Maisie, perhaps you should know that Dan Pritchard belongs to me. I love him and he is mine."

Maisie's smile was tolerant, humorous, maddening; it was apparent to the watching Mellenger that she had anticipated some such open, direct attack and had schooled herself to meet it.

"Indeed, Tamea, my dear!" she drawled. "Has Mr. Pritchard, then, given himself to you so soon?"

"No," Tamea replied honestly, "he has not. But—he will."

"How interesting!" She turned to Dan. "Dan, old boy, since it is your mission in life to make Tamea happy, permit me to give you to her. Here he is,

Tamea, you greedy girl." She chuckled adorably, gave Dan a little shove toward Tamea and crossed to the piano where Mellenger stood, grave and embarrassed. She gave him her hand in friendly fashion.

"Clever, clever woman," he breathed, for her ear alone.

"How adorably primitive she is, Mr. Mellenger!"

He nodded. "Between the two of us, however," he answered, still in low voice, "we'll fix the young lady's clock."

The mask fell from Maisie's face and Mellenger saw in it naught but pain and terror.

And then Julia announced dinner.

CHAPTER XIV

MANY arduous and adventurous years in the Fourth Estate had sharpened Mark Mellenger's native ability to think and act quickly in an emergency. He saw that Tamea's bold onslaught for the love rights in his friend had disturbed Pritchard greatly; the latter's face was rosy with an embarrassment that was all the more poignant because nothing that Dan could do or say would relieve the situation; Maisie had apparently exhausted her ammunition and would, unless supported promptly, retire from the field. Weeping, doubtless. Something had to be done, and in this emergency anything would be better than nothing.

Mellenger strolled up to Tamea and offered her his arm to take her in to dinner. But Tamea only smiled at him the tender, tolerant smile which, apparently, she had for all men, and said in a low voice: "Thank you, Monsieur Mellengair, but I will take the arm of Dan Pritchard."

"Oh, but you must not do that!" Mellenger protested confidentially and addressing her in excellent French. "You are a member of this household, while Miss Morrison is a guest here tonight. If Mr. Pritchard were to

permit her to go in to dinner on my arm, that would be equivalent to informing her that she was not welcome in his home. It would be a very great discourtesy—in this country," he added parenthetically.

"Oh! I did not understand that. Nobody has told me these things. I would not care to embarrass anyone."

"Thank you, Miss Larrieau. You are very kind and considerate." He bowed to her with great courtesy, and she accepted his arm.

"I like you, Mellengair—no, I will call you Mel, like Dan who loves you."

"That's better."

"And you shall call me Tamea."

"Thank you. I think that is better, too."

She came closer to him. "And you will tell me—things?"

"You mean the things you should know in order to avoid embarrassment to yourself—and others?"

"*Oui*, Mel."

"There is not a great deal that you will have to be told, Tamea. Merely an outline of the principal customs of this country which differ so radically from yours. For instance, just now you made a very sad mistake—oh, very, very sad!"

"But no!" the girl protested.

"But yes! You were very discourteous to Miss Morrison."

"About Dan?"

"Yes."

"But that is the truth."

"It is not always necessary to tell the truth. You have assumed that Miss Morrison is in love with Dan."

"She is, Mel. I know."

"But he does not know this, and she would not tell him for all the wealth of the world."

"Such a stupid! Why not?"

"It is the custom of the land," he assured her.

"Then I must not tell Dan Pritchard I love him?"

"Not unless he tells you first that he loves you." She laughed softly but scornfully. "Has he told you that he loves you?"

"With his eyes—yes."

"Eyes are not admissible as evidence. What you mistook for love may be admiration. Until he speaks with his tongue you must remain silent, else will you be dishonored."

They had reached the dining room. Maisie and Dan were following, in frozen silence. Mellenger tucked her chair in under Tamea, and over her head he winked at Maisie and Dan. There was a terrifying silence until after Julia had served the soup. Then Tamea spoke.

"It appears," she said very contritely, "that I have been stupid and of gross manners. I have offended you, Maisie, and to you, dear Dan, I am as a dishonored

woman. I am truly sorry. Will you both forgive, please?"

"You poor, bewildered dear," said Maisie, and laughed. To Mellenger's amazement the laugh held real humor. She got up, walked around the table to Tamea's side and kissed her. "Of course you are forgiven. You did not understand. How could you know, Tamea, that Dan and I are to be married? Nobody told you, I dare say. Dan, darling, did you tell Tamea of our engagement?"

"Of course, I didn't," he began. He was at once amazed, indignant and profoundly complimented. "Why, Maisie——"

"Shut up, fool!" Mellenger's lips formed the words without speaking them. "Do you want to spill the beans?"

Maisie returned to her seat, flushed, bright-eyed, distinctly triumphant, and Mellenger realized that, between himself and Maisie, poor Tamea had been thoroughly crushed, humiliated beyond words. She contented herself with looking at Dan very curiously, as if she were seeing him for the first time.

"Now," Mellenger remarked dryly, "I think we'll all feel equal to imbibing a modicum of soup. Maisie—pardon my effrontery in calling you by your first name on such brief acquaintance, but then those who love Dan always inspire me with a desire to know them better

and act as if I had known them always—how long have you and Dan been engaged?"

Dan glared at him. Maisie, scenting the deviltry behind his query, liked him for it. "I really do not remember, Mark—pardon my effrontery in addressing you by your first name on such brief acquaintance, but it seems I've known you always. Dan, when did you first propose to me?"

"Maisie, you're an imp."

"A benevolent imp, at any rate," Mellenger adjured him. "She goes out of her way to make everybody around her comfortable."

"Did Dan tell you he desired you, Maisie?" Tamea was speaking now.

"What makes you ask that, Tamea?"

"I inquire to know. This is important."

"Well, Tamea, I don't suppose Dan ever told me in so many words——"

"Ah! With his eyes, then?"

Maisie shrugged. "I suppose so."

Tamea favored Mellenger with a sidelong glance of disillusionment and contempt. She spoke in French. "It appears that the rules of deportment are broken as readily by those who dwell in this country as by those who are ignorant of those rules. Now I shall proceed to be happy again. What an excellent soup!"

She saw by the look in Maisie's eyes that Maisie had not understood her. And this was true, for while

Maisie was presumed to have learned French in high school, it was high-school French, and Tamea's rapid-fire utterance was far beyond her understanding.

"I hope you will be very happy," she said in English to Maisie, who thanked her with a demure smile. To Mellenger she said in a swift aside: "I know very well she will not! What a curious dinner party! This woman is thinking of schemes to take from me the man whom I desire. Alas! She is no match for me, for look you, Mel, she has not the courage to take that which she desires."

"Unfortunately, she has not, Tamea. Nevertheless, she may develop a form of courage that may amaze you. Just now she gave you a bad minute or two."

Tamea shrugged. "I have no fear. That which I desire I take, and that which I take I think, perhaps—I—can—keep."

"Well, suppose we discuss something else," Mellenger suggested in his surprisingly good French. "And if you do not feel equal to the task of keeping pace with the discussion, try being silent awhile."

Tamea included Dan and Maisie in her retort to this fundamentally solid bit of advice. "This large friend of yours does not like me, no?"

"Why, of course he likes you. Nobody could help liking you!" This from Maisie, who was bound to be cheerful and complimentary at any cost.

"You are wrong, Maisie. Mel thinks very quickly, and he talks as quickly as he thinks. He thinks clearly, too. . . . Well, I should like him for my good friend. One does not care for stupeed men. Mel is very honest. He will make a good fight, yes? I think so. Yes, you bet. And I will make a good fight, also."

"Something tells me you will. Are you the offspring of a nation of warriors?" Mellenger queried.

"My mother was the daughter of a chief—a king, bred from a thousand kings. And in Riva he who would be king must be a warrior and a leader of warriors."

"Is polyandry practiced in Riva?" Dan had emerged from the trance into which the startling events of the past few minutes had thrown him.

"I do not know what that is, dear Dan Pritchard," declared Tamea.

"I mean, do the women have more than one husband, and do the women choose their husbands? In this country," he hastened to add, "the men do the choosing."

"Indeed?" Tamea seemed to find this humorous. "Men are weaklings everywhere, I think, and in this country, as in Riva, it appears the women sometimes do the choosing of their husbands. What else may one do? You men are so stupeed!"

"Let us discuss the League of Nations, Dan," Mellenger suggested. "That is a subject upon which you and I may hazard an opinion. Tamea, are you an ad-

vocate of the right of self-determination for the lesser nations—Ireland, for instance?"

"You make the josh, Mel."

He chuckled, gave his attention to Maisie and displayed an amazing facility at small talk and the gossip of her set. Thereafter he addressed but an occasional word to Tamea, who, however, appeared to relish this neglect, since it gave her ample opportunity to favor the uncomfortable Dan with languishing looks. With the advent of the salad Mellenger deftly piloted the conversation into the realm of trade and finance, appealed very frequently to Dan for confirmation of some theory or an expression of opinion. He contrived to leave Tamea quite out of it, and when at last Maisie rose from the table and the others followed her into the drawing room, Tamea was sensible of a feeling of neglect, of paternalism. She resented this with all the fierce resentment of her hot blood.

But Mellenger was tact and graciousness personified; and when, as the evening wore on, it began to dawn on Tamea that his action was not predicated so much on antagonism to her as on a desire to save Maisie from humiliation, her resentment began to fade. She observed that Dan had little to say, that the conversation was dominated by Mellenger and Maisie; in listening to their words, in watching the play of emotions on their faces, an hour slipped by. Then Mellenger sat at the piano and played while Maisie sang; and later

Maisie played while Mellenger sang. Tamea enjoyed their songs immensely and urged them on until ten o'clock, when Dan suggested that perhaps she was tired and would like to retire.

"You wish it?" Tamea queried softly.

He nodded, so Tamea kissed him good night and then followed her caress with one each for Mellenger and Maisie.

When she had gone Mellenger swung round on the piano stool and grinned at Dan Pritchard.

"This has been a trying evening, old horse," he declared, "but, by and large and thanks to two people who appear to possess the faculty of keeping their heads when all about them are losing theirs, what threatened to become a riot has ended in a love feast. Dan, that girl is nobody's fool. Her head is quite filled with brains."

"I think, when she has become a little more civilized, she will be adorable," Maisie added.

"She is adorable now," Dan reminded them. Subconsciously he desired to defend any weakness he might have exhibited during the evening. Also, he had an impulse to castigate Maisie for her inexplicable conduct in declaring, in the presence of his other guests, that an engagement existed between them.

"That's no excuse for your losing your head over her, old son."

"Quite so," Maisie echoed. "Because I sensed your

helpless state, following Tamea's frank declaration of a proprietary interest in you, I invented our engagement as a sort of funk-hole for you to crawl into, Dan."

"You were very courageous, Maisie."

"It was a forlorn hope and it failed. I might as well inform you, my friends, that Tamea was unimpressed." Mellenger was very serious now. "What are you going to do about this girl, Dan? You've got to get her out of your house."

Dan shrugged helplessly.

"If you send her to a boarding school now," Maisie suggested, "she would matriculate in the middle of a semester. You refer to her as a child, Dan, but she is a fully developed woman, and I fear that her education, in English at least, has been so neglected that she would have to start in the same class with girls of ten or twelve. This would prove embarrassing to her. She should have a year of private tutoring."

"Where, Maisie?"

"I do not know, Dan."

"But you telephoned to me this evening that you had a plan to discuss."

"My plan is not fully developed, Dan, but it contemplated the engagement of a governess and companion for Tamea, and sending them both to a warmer climate—say Los Angeles—until Tamea becomes acclimated. You seemed worried about her in the cooler climate of San Francisco."

"That's a splendid plan," Mellenger hastened to interrupt. "The success of it depends upon the acquisition of the right sort of governess, of course. She should be firm, indomitable, tactful, able and possess the physical attributes of the champion heavyweight pugilist of the world."

"I fear you are absolutely right," Dan sighed.

"Well, then, I'm at my wits' end, Dan'l," Maisie confessed.

"I am not," Mellenger replied coolly. "I beg of you, Maisie, to dismiss the matter. I shall go into executive session with myself and evolve a plan that will be puncture-proof. I fear me neither you nor Dan is able to think clearly in this emergency."

Maisie flashed him a swift glance of deepest gratitude. "In that event I think I shall go home," she said, and rang for Julia to fetch her wrap. Dan escorted her out to her car, and as she gave him her hand at parting he bent and kissed it humbly, turned and left her without the formality of saying good night.

Fortunately, Maisie thought she could understand the failure of his conversational powers.

CHAPTER XV

"WELL, Mel," Dan declared as he returned to the drawing room after seeing Maisie to her car, "I am prepared for the worst. Fly to it, old philosopher. I observe you are fairly bristling with bellicose veins."

"That is only additional proof that you are purblind." Mellenger helped himself to a cigar, rang for Sooey Wan, ordered a Scotch and soda and removed his dinner coat. The major portion of his existence was spent working in his shirt-sleeves, and tonight he had work to do. So he cleared for action.

"Now, then," he began, "are you or are you not engaged to be married to Maisie Morrison?"

"I am not."

"I thought so. Going to be?"

"I—don't know, Mel."

"I'll make up your mind for you. You are."

"Why?"

"For any number of incontestable reasons. However, the principal reason is that she is very much in love with you, and she is not particularly happy about it. You're such a dull dog."

"Granting that, why should I engage myself to Maisie?"

"Because it would be good for you. It would be protection from the world. You're going to marry Maisie sooner or later. Why not do it now and get the worry of it off your mind?"

"But, you double-dyed idiot, I'm not at all certain I'd be perfectly happy with Maisie."

"I'll dissipate your doubts. You wouldn't be. No man ever is perfectly happy in the married state."

"How do you know?"

"Observation and philosophical meditation. You would be perfectly happy with Maisie about eighty-five per cent of the time, and all you have to have in order to win is a controlling interest, or fifty-one per cent. All married life is a continuous adjustment of conflicting personalities. What you are seeking, we all seek—the wild, abandoned thrill of a love that will never grow old or stale or commonplace—a love that will punctuate your life with wonderful, breathless moments—moments that you would not miss, even though in claiming them you realized that sorrow and heartbreak might be the inevitable outcome of your yielding. My dear old friend, you paint pictures in water colors and see them turn to crude charcoal smudges. Dan, you seek the unattainable; when you have found her, she will have been married ten years to a barber!"

There fell between them a long and pregnant silence. Then:

"You spoke just now of—breathless moments, moments one would not miss, even though in claiming them one realizes that sorrow and heartbreak may be the inevitable outcome. Have you ever known such a breathless moment?"

"Yes—in France, during the war. She was a little dancer, about twenty, I should say. I found her weeping and half conscious in the Place Vendôme at four o'clock of a winter morning. There had been an air raid and a great deal of anti-aircraft firing; she had been struck in the foot by a shrapnel falling five thousand meters. I carried her to my billet . . . two months . . . she will never dance again . . . fortunately I was ordered home . . . send her a few francs every month . . . not very much, because I can't afford much, but she writes . . . breathless moments when I get her letters . . . brains, imagination . . . I think she loves me—always will, perhaps, but it's no good thinking too much about it. I have gotten over it." Mellenger blew a succession of smoke rings and watched them float upward to frame a face he would never see again, except in his dreams. And dreams fade as men grow older and the fires of youth burn out.

"And was it worth the price, Mel?"

"No, I knew that in the beginning. No joy that leaves a pain is quite worth having."

"Yet we will never have done with our longing for the adventure. I suppose that is why men who have never worn a uniform feel their hearts beat high at the sight of home-coming troops."

"Yes, I think so. But remember, those civilians see only the avenue with the flags flying; they have never seen the wreckage or heard the wail of a funeral march. They've only dreamed of that and painted a vision they call the Field of Honor, with a trail across it labeled the Path of Glory. They know it leads to Hell, but they know also that some men escape. You know, Dan, we can always visualize ourselves escaping, because the wish is father to the thought."

"Well, at any rate, Mel, I have lived to know—one breathless moment."

"Do not know another, my friend."

"Believe me, I did not desire to know this one. I—I——"

Mellenger waved his cigar in absolution. "You didn't have any help at the critical moment. I observed the event. I was sitting in the semi-twilight of this room, thinking—I had asked Julia not to turn on the light except in the hall. And then you and Tamea came in . . . I saw your face, I saw hers. . . . And I had seen the face of the other girl this afternoon. Tamea has told me in so many words, in French, that she is going to land you; that she doesn't consider Maisie a foeman worthy of her steel. Says Maisie

hasn't got the courage to take that which she desires. Tamea has. I'll swear to that."

"There is nothing wrong about that."

"Certainly not. A convention of maidenly modesty has metamorphosed many a fine woman into an embittered, disillusioned old maid. She could have had her man for the asking—for the taking; and because she neither asked nor took he thought her repression spelled indifference or dislike.

"There are many shy, embarrassed men in this world, you know. They are always unhappy because always married to terrible women.

"Big women, fat women, red-headed, dominating, coarse women, women with thick ankles, sloppy women, dull women, over-dressed women, loud women, but all women who flouted convention and who just naturally helped themselves to the shy, embarrassed, gentle little men they coveted."

"Praise be, Tamea doesn't come within the scope of your female *index expurgatorius*. Isn't she a glorious creature?"

"Of course she is," Mellenger agreed petulantly. "She's more than glorious. She's devastating, and all the more ruinous to your peace of mind because she is simple, natural, unspoiled, eager and amorous. But you've got to put your bright day-dreams behind you and marry Maisie Morrison."

"But why, Mel?"

"Why, man, you cannot possibly contemplate the prospect of miscegenation?"

"Does Tamea remotely resemble a mulatto, a quadroon or an octoroon?"

"She is half Polynesian."

"But a pure-bred Polynesian is a Caucasian."

"Very well, then, if you insist. But I insist that the Caucasian race has many subdivisions. An Arab is a Caucasian; so is a Hindoo; but if you marry a woman of Arabic or Hindoo blood and have children by her, your off-spring will be Eurasians. Tamea is a half-breed brown white. And she's not very brown, either—sort of old ivory. She'd pass for a white girl anywhere. People who do not know her blood will say, 'Isn't she a marvelous brunette type of beauty!'"

"Well?"

"If she bore you sons, how would you feel if they should grow up to be great, hearty, brown fellows, unmistakably Polynesian, with prehensile great toes, an aversion to work, a penchant for white vices? You cannot dodge the Mendelian law, my boy. Like begets like, but in a union of opposites we get throwbacks. Breed a black rabbit to a white one and you will get piebald rabbits. Breed these latter to a white rabbit, and continue to breed the offspring of succeeding unions to other white rabbits until you have bred all the black out of them. About the time you think you have beaten the Mendelian law, the pure white descendant of

a black and white union, a hundred generations removed, will present you with a litter of pure black rabbits! You're not going to run the risk of mongrelizing the species, are you?"

"No, I do not think I am, Mel."

"Do you know you are not?"

"No."

"I thought so." Mellenger rose, walked to Dan and thrust the ruddy end of his cigar in the latter's face. "You're in love with Tamea already, aren't you?"

"I don't know, Mel. Something has happened. It happened tonight. You saw it happen. It never happened to me before. Good Lord, Mel, old man, my head has been in a whirl ever since."

"That isn't love. It's infatuation. I've been through it. I know. It's a wonderful madness. It's what's wrong with the world today. It's at the root of the divorce problem. Infatuation. And the fools think it is love.

"Nothing divine about it, nothing spiritual; its victims take no thought of the qualifications so essential to successful marriage—an even temper, generosity, unselfishness, tenderness, physical fitness, the absence of mental and physical repulsiveness.

"My dear man, love should be born in reverence, and if later it develops into infatuation—well, I suppose that would be quite all right, since in that case infatuation would be the natural, normal outgrowth of love—

the apotheosis of it. If you marry Maisie Morrison—look here, Dan, you say you do not love her——"

"I'm not certain, Mel."

"Then it is a fact that you think a very great deal of her. You have the utmost respect for her, you are happy in her society, you feel reverent toward her."

"Of course I do."

"Then, you star-gazing jackanapes, marry her and become infatuated with her afterward. She can't reach out and grab you and maul you and paw you over and kiss you and whisper love words to you—like this child of nature, Tamea. It's up to you to do that, Dan. How are you going to discover Maisie's possibilities to compete with this passion-flower, Tamea, unless you uncover them yourself? You're a weak, cowardly sort of man where women are concerned. I grow very weary of you, my friend. You want to eat your cake and have it."

Dan laughed long and pleasurably at his old friend's outburst. "You're such a comfort to me, Mel," he declared. "I dare say you are right. I'm cowardly. But then, one shouldn't take even the most remote chance when he marries. Marriage is until death."

"Death sometimes comes early to some married men, and it is welcome. If you marry Tamea you will die spiritually long before the breath leaves your carcass and the doctor signs a death certificate authorizing your burial."

"What a gloomy picture you paint!"

"Marrying an exotic woman like Tamea—a half aborigine—is like marrying any other aborigine, because all aborigines are pigmented. And no matter how transcendent the beauty of a pigmented aborigine—or half-breed aborigine—that beauty fades early. They degenerate physically and mentally. They are old at thirty, repulsive at forty, hags at fifty."

"Nonsense! Educate Tamea, spread over her the veneer of civilization, teach her how to play, cultivate her voice, dress her exquisitely, and who shall say of her, 'You—*you*—are half aborigine'?"

"You speak of a veneer of civilization. Sometimes I think the veneer is very thin and that man today stands, basically, where he stood five thousand years ago. Dan, it isn't a question of a veneer of civilization. It's a question of the adaptability of species to its environment. How long do you suppose it would take you, a white man, to adapt yourself to the environment of such an island, say, as Riva, in eastern Polynesia?"

"I couldn't hazard a guess."

"I could, and it would be a fairly accurate guess, since the history of white occupation of the isles of the south Pacific will support my contention. You would be an infinitesimal portion of the moral and physical decay before you had lived there five years. After that you wouldn't care. It's like mixing two acids that,

combined, produce an explosion. There is never any real adaptability of the human species, you know. As long as you and Tamea lived you would have different thoughts and different thought impulses, different moral values. This difference would prove an attraction at first; then, gradually, you would begin to find her ways inferior to yours, so you would have a contempt for them, which means that presently you would grow to hate Tamea."

Mellenger sat down and rested his head in his hands. "I wish I could remember my geology and paleontology," he complained. "However, I never cared for it, so I swept it out of my rag bag of a mind. At any rate, you are much older than Tamea——"

"Oh, not so old as to make a vital difference. About eighteen years."

"Shut up, you ass. You ditch my train of thought. You are millions of years older than Tamea. She is a Neolithic maid and you're Paleozoic or Silurian or Cretaceous or something, and in order to reach common ground she'll have to climb up through a lot of queer strata or you'll have to dig down. You paint mighty fine pictures, but down in Riva they're still carving hideous gods out of limestone and making hieroglyphics with a burned stick; they're still chasing each other around stumps with knobby clubs."

"You're the man who can paint pictures!"

Mellenger sighed. "No, I cannot. I used to think

I could, but nobody else agrees with me, and now I agree with them. Thought once I'd develop into a great novelist, when all that God Almighty created me for was to be a great newspaper man! . . . Well, I'm not embittered, because I can still think clearly and without illusion. And I can see fairly clearly, too. . . . You've got to get rid of this girl."

"You're quite bent on clearing the way for Maisie, aren't you?"

"Yes. But you are my friend, faithful and just to me, and I've loved you since our freshman days in college. The years and wealth and success haven't changed you. You're still the same shy, helpless, gentle, obstinate, wistful boy, and—and—I—I want to do something for you, old son. The best thing I can do is to clear the decks for Maisie and marry you off to her. She's a fine woman."

"But I do not know, really, how to get rid of Tamea. I can't just chuck her out, you know. Can't send her to a hotel or an apartment house and let her go on the loose. Maisie's plan is ill-advised. You realized that."

"Maisie didn't have any plan. She isn't up to the job of collected thinking now."

"But she said she had a plan."

"Yes, I know. She wanted an excuse to come over here this evening to guard you from Tamea."

"Mel, you have the most extraordinary ideas. You newspaper men are always so suspicious of motives."

"Rats! Not suspicion. Absolute knowledge. When you asked her for her plan she floundered. Got into deep water close to the shore and I had to throw her a line. Immediately thereafter—but not until Tamea had retired—Maisie went home."

"Have you a plan?"

"You bet I have. The talk of a school is sheer nonsense. That girl is beyond school, and if you put her in a school she'll not remain put."

"You've overlooked one important detail. If she may not remain here or in school she may promptly go to the deuce, for lack of proper control."

"That would be all right, Dan. The main point is that she must not take you with her. If she sticks around this house she'll get you into Town Topics. She has designs on you, my boy. That's why I suggest you queer them by marrying Maisie Morrison immediately, if not sooner. Maisie has, in effect, proposed to you, and you've been very cavalier in your treatment of the proposal."

"What do you suppose made her make that wild statement to Tamea, Mel?"

"The best excuse in life. Self-preservation. It's the first law of human nature."

"Just starting a backfire, eh?"

Mellenger nodded and put on his dinner jacket. "I suppose you have observed that women usually marry the men they make up their minds to marry."

"No, I have not observed it."

"You're a greater numbskull than I thought you were. Two women have made up their minds to get you, and one of them is going to succeed." He glanced at his watch. "Well, I suppose Maisie Morrison is safe in her bed by this time, crying herself to sleep, wondering how she is ever to muster the courage to face you again after tonight. Better send her some flowers in the morning and ask her to go for a drive with you. That will put her at her ease. I managed to give Tamea some food for thought, and with her sleep has been out of the question. She looked out of her bedroom window and saw Maisie drive away. Then she crept downstairs, and even now she is sitting out on the hall stairs listening to every word we say. Tamea! Enter!"

Tamea appeared in the doorway.

"I am such a splendid clairvoyant. I can see around a corner," Mellenger remarked dryly. . . . "Well, if I had heard the stairs squeak a little earlier in the evening I would not have talked so freely. Good night, Tamea. Good night, Dan. Thanks for a wonderful dinner and a wonderful evening. I'll be back next Thursday night, as usual."

He smiled patronizingly as, on his way to the door, he passed Tamea. She turned slowly and her fiery glance followed him.

"No, Monsieur Mellengair, you have made the great

mistake. I am not the go-to-the-deuce kind. But if that is interesting, perhaps I shall make the experiment, no? Well, when I do I shall make it alone, thank you."

"Now I suppose you're very angry with me, Tamea."

"A little. Not so much as I think I shall be tomorrow. I forgive you much tonight because you are not a fool. But—I shall remember some things that you said—and those things that I remember I shall not forgive. Good night."

"Good night."

Dan Pritchard roused from the dumb amazement into which he had been thrown by Tamea's sudden appearance on the scene. "Hey, wait a moment, Mel! I'll walk downtown with you," he called. He had a sudden impulse to flee from danger.

But the heavy oaken door had already closed behind his friend, and in the entrance to the drawing room Tamea stood looking at him. "Come to me," she murmured. "Come, *chéri!*"

He went.

Tamea's round, beautiful arms came up around his neck slowly, caressingly, and his head was drawn gently down toward her glorious face until her lips touched his ear.

"That man Mellengair—he is your friend. He is not mine. But if I had, like you, such a friend—ah, I would be so rich! You must never lose him, *chéri!*

Oh, yes, I hate him, but that does not matter. He is very wise, but he does not know your Tamea. Ah, no, dear one. I would have you—ah, so happy—and I would be happy with you. But if to be with me meant sorrow for you—oh, I could not be so cruel! First I would die. And you will believe that? Yes?"

Dan's heart swelled—with that ecstacy that was almost a pain. And then Tamea kissed his ear lightly, patted his cheek and fled upstairs to her room, leaving him standing there—breathless, with a feeling that, be the price what it might be, he could not afford to miss such another moment as this. . . . It did not occur to him that sorrow and heartbreak might be the outcome of his yielding.

CHAPTER XVI

LONG before the sun came creeping up beyond Mt. Diablo, Dan Pritchard made the discovery that the man who has too many things to think about cannot devote constructive thought to any of them. After being the innocent cause of more discomfort than Dan had thought it possible for any man to experience in a single evening, Tamea had swept from his heart in a moment a feeling of resentment, or irritation, that had been developing there. Her tender little speech, evidencing as it did the essential nobility of her primitive soul, had surrounded the girl, in Dan's eyes, with a newer, more distinctive charm, and rendered more distressing the prospect of the impending parting. For all the embarrassment she had caused him in Maisie's presence, Dan realized that Tamea was not *gauche*, that she possessed in full measure a characteristic rather uncommon among her white sisters, and that was sportsmanship.

Tamea fought in the open; she was above a mean, small, underhanded action. Notwithstanding the fact that Tamea's calm announcement to her rival that Dan was her man had caused him to yearn for a hole into which he might disappear, effectually dragging the

aperture in after him, Dan had a hearty man's hearty appreciation of her frankness, her simplicity, her utter lack of dissembling, of feminine guile. He entertained a similar feeling of admiration for Maisie, in whom the exigencies of this peculiar situation had developed similar characteristics. And lastly, he was sensible of a little titillation to his masculine vanity in the knowledge that two glorious women desired him, that they were engaged in a battle of wits and charm to win him.

He was, on the whole, however, very uncomfortable and apprehensive of unfortunate developments. Mellenger, beloved pal of his boyhood and steadfast friend of his mature years, had read him truthfully and then told him that which he had read. Dan was unwilling to believe that Mellenger had read him aright yet he had lacked the courage to deny it.

What a keen fellow Mark Mellenger was! How prudent, farseeing and fearless! And how charitable, how thoroughly understanding! Dear old Mel! He hadn't gotten ahead in life. His one great ambition had failed dismally of realization, and he had had to content himself with second place; nevertheless he was not embittered. His life was taken up with doing well the task he could do so much better than others; no hint of the sadness of unfulfilled dreams ever escaped him, and until tonight Dan had never seen him excited or distressed about anything.

"The old boy has a tremendous affection for me," Dan meditated as he got out of bed, donned dressing gown and slippers and sat by the window to watch the sun rise over San Francisco bay. "What a blow it would be to him were I to—but of course I shall not. The idea is unthinkable."

Gradually his mind turned to thoughts of business, to the increasing annoyance of association with old John Casson, to the rice market. He would call upon Ridley, the rice broker, and put pressure behind the selling drive if Ridley failed to render an encouraging report by noon. Once in the clear on those rice deals, he was resolved to do one of two things—buy John Casson out or force Casson to buy him out.

And then there was the accursed question of what to do with Tamea. That also would have to be solved today.

At seven o'clock he heard Sooey Wan puttering about in the kitchen below, so he shaved, bathed, dressed and descended for an early breakfast. Sooey Wan served him in profound silence, but eyed him with a steady, speculative gaze; from time to time he shook his old head as if he, too, wrestled with problems hard to solve. When Dan left the house Sooey Wan accompanied him into the hall, helped him into his overcoat and handed him hat and stick. Then he voiced something of what was on his mind.

"Boss, how soon you mally Captain's girl?"

"How dare you ask me such a question? Mind your own business, you grinning old idol, or I'll fire you one of these bright days. I'm not going to marry the Captain's girl."

Sooey Wan did not seem to be impressed. "Helluva house you ketchum, boss, you fire Sooey Wan. Allee time you makee too much talkee-talk. Talk velly cheap, but ketchum money you likee buy whisky. You no mally Captain's girl, eh? Well, when you mally Missie Maisie?"

"I don't know. Why do you ask?"

Sooey Wan rubbed his corrugated brow and scowled in huge despair. "Go 'long, boy, go 'long," he entreated wearily. "Allee time you makee Sooey Wan sick. Why I ask? Wha's mallah? You no wanchee ketchum little baby—ketchum fi', six son?"

"I haven't thought about it," Dan growled.

"Hully up. Thinkee quick!" Sooey Wan entreated. "Pitty soon if you no thinkee, evelything go blooey-blooey. Sooey Wan talkee Captain's girl, she tellee me pitty soon ketchum my boss for mally. Now you say no ketchum. Wha's mallah? You thinkee make fool of Sooey Wan? Listen, boy. When Captain's girl say ketchum boss, then Sooey Wan bettee bankroll on Captain's girl. She ketch you, sure. Oh-h-h, velly nice!"

Dan slammed the door in Sooey Wan's face and hastened down the street. It was an hour's walk to his

TAMEA, who had known Dan Pritchard five minutes and had kissed *him* twice.

MAISIE, who had loved Dan twelve years and had permitted him to kiss her once.

office and his head ached from too much thinking. The exercise would do him good.

He purchased the morning papers and looked through them for Tamea's picture and the story of her arrival, of her father's dramatic death. Mellenger, for some unknown reason, had not featured his story as Dan had expected. It was a short straight news story, on the second page, with a very good picture of Tamea, and Dan noted that Mellenger had said nothing of the fact that he was to be Tamea's guardian, that she was a guest at his home. The other paper had handled the story more flamboyantly and featured it on the first page, but with an eye single to local color the editor had run the photograph of Tamea in the Mother Hubbard dress.

"Brainless apes," Dan growled. "Makes her look like a colored mammy. I hate them."

Arrived at his office, he had scarcely read his mail before Ridley, the rice broker, called him up.

"I can unload that four thousand tons at Shanghai for cash," he announced, "but the price I can get will not leave you much of a profit."

"How much?"

"Fourteen cents, at ships' tackles, Shanghai."

Dan figured rapidly while Ridley held the wire. The price quoted would net his firm a profit of about eight thousand dollars. "Sold!" he cried triumphantly.

By noon the deal had been definitely closed with

Ridley's client, the space contracted for on the Malayan transferred to the new owner of the rice, and the check in payment deposited in bank. Dan's mental thermometer commenced to rise, so he decided to accord himself the delight of breaking the news to old Casson.

The senior partner's face darkened with fury. "You've cost us a potential profit of a quarter of a million dollars, Pritchard. I suppose you realize that this confounded interference of yours means the end of our business association."

"I hope so. Thank you, I wouldn't care for another helping of the mustard. Do you propose buying me out or selling out to me?"

"I would prefer to buy you out—today—and carry those rice deals myself."

"Unfortunately, the sale of my interest here will not invalidate my signature on some of this firm's paper, Mr. Casson."

"That might be arranged somehow. What do you want for your interest?"

Dan named a figure and old Casson nodded approval.

"Terms?" he queried.

"Cash."

"Impossible."

"Well, then, fifty thousand in cash and the balance on secured notes."

"Impossible."

"I had a suspicion you have dissipated in crazy

deals most of your share of the money we made during the war. Well, it appears you cannot buy me out, and until our rice deals have been safely disposed of, if not at a profit at least without loss, I do not yearn to take over your share. It might prove a very bad investment. However, for reasons which would never occur to you, I am willing, once the rice deals have been disposed of, to buy you out on a basis of the actual value of our assets, but with nothing additional for good-will. All the good-will value of Casson and Pritchard has been created by my father and myself."

"I shall not sell on that basis."

"Very well. The day on which our last note is paid I am relieved of all contingent liability as a partner in Casson and Pritchard. We will dissolve partnership. That will kill your credit with our bankers and I shall sit calmly by and watch YOU go to smash. When you've had your beating, sir, you will be glad to sell—at my terms. I am generous now. You may be sure I shall not be generous then."

Old Casson glowered, puffed at his cigar and then studied the ash reflectively.

"While you were busy this morning unloading that Shanghai rice at a paltry eight thousand dollars profit—just because you lack the courage of a jack-rabbit—I disposed of the Manila rice at the market."

"To whom?"

"Katsuma and Company."

"Japs, eh?"

"They're good."

"Financial rating is unquestionably splendid. Know anything about the moral rating of a Japanese business firm?"

"They've always met their business obligations."

"Any Jap will—until the meeting of them becomes burdensome or unprofitable. Ninety day paper, I suppose."

Casson smiled triumphantly. "No, not with Katsuma and Company. Sight draft against bill of lading, payable at the Philippine National Bank."

"Well, that's better than I had expected. Unfortunately the cargo has to be loaded aboard ship before that draft will be cashable. That means thirty days of suspense—and I do not like the financial aspect in the East. Prices *must* come down—and once they start downward they may develop into an economic avalanche. It's an unhealthy situation and I don't like it. Where's your contract with Katsuma and Company?"

Casson handed it to him and Dan scanned it carefully, nodded his approval, rang for the chief clerk and gave the contract to him to be placed in the safe.

"Well, on the face of things, we're out of the rice market," he said as he rose to return to his own office. "I feel much relieved."

In his private office he found Mark Mellenger wait-

ing for him. "Well, you bird of ill omen," Dan greeted him cheerily, "what brings you here?"

"Had an hour to kill and thought I'd kill it here. I do not go on duty until one thirty. Dan, I've been thinking. What, if anything, have you decided in the matter of the girl, Tamea?"

"Nothing, Mel. I've been too busy on something else."

"It would be well to make Tamea's matter a special order of business. Have you thought of anything to do?"

"Not a thing."

"I suspected that might be the case. The fact is that you are being ruled by your subconscious mind. You do not wish to do anything. However, you shall. I have a plan."

"Indeed?"

"None of your sarcasm. Not that it will avail you anything. It's just futile—wasted energy—on me. You must induce Maisie Morrison to take Tamea to Del Monte for a couple of weeks."

"My dear man, why should I ask Maisie to burden herself with such a responsibility?"

"Well, it *is* selfish, I admit, but then if one would make an omelette one must break eggs. Maisie will regard it as a burden and she will appreciate to the fullest your cussedness in asking her, but she will accept

the nomination gracefully—indeed, I am moved to add—gratefully."

"How do you know she will?"

"Don't know. I'm merely guessing. I guessed her right last night, did I not? . . . Yes, I'm not half bad at guessing things."

"But something tells me there is mutual hostility between Maisie and Tamea. They disliked each other at sight."

"Quite true. But then women who despise each other for a reason which may not be discussed will never admit that they despise each other. And Maisie will subjugate her very natural desire to spank Tamea if she realizes that by so doing she will be enabled to thwart Tamea in the latter's campaign for your affection. It occurs to me, therefore——"

"You mean that Maisie will eagerly grasp the opportunity to take Tamea out of my presence and keep her out?"

"Dan, you poor moon-calf, you're growing brilliant. You're beginning to do some head-work. Answering your question, I would say that such is my interpretation of what will be her mental attitude."

"Women are so queer," Dan declared helplessly.

"Women study the essentials which most men overlook, to wit, cause and effect. The adverb *why* was invented for the use of women. They always want to know. When they have a battle on they use their

heads to think continuously of the enemy. They do not forget him or ignore him or underestimate him—I mean her."

"Old cynic!"

"Not at all. That's sound argument based on observation. A smart woman never forgets that her opponent is extremely likely to act with discretion."

"Well?"

"I think you ought to ask Maisie and her aunt to be your guests at Del Monte for a few weeks, and explain to Maisie that you will take it kindly of her to look after Tamea. Be sure to inform her that while you will drive down with them and spend the week-end, you will motor home on Monday—and stay at home thereafter. You see, Dan," Mellenger continued, "there will be much to divert and interest Tamea down there. She can ride, and if she cannot ride she can spend her time learning. Same thing with golf. She can swim—and I dare say she'll be the sensation of the beach. Lots of good looking, idle gents down there to take her mind off you, and with Maisie and her aunt to chaperon her, and Julia to help steer her straight, you stand a very fair chance of forgetting her, of having her forget you."

"That is a very good plan. After a few weeks there I will have her school arrangements made. Then I'll have a talk with her, tell her exactly what I want, and that I am going away on a trip to Europe and that she

must be a very good, obedient girl while I am away."

"But—are you really going to Europe?"

"I am. In about thirty days I'm going to sell out to old Casson, or buy him out. If the former, I'll be free to go. If the latter, I'll appoint a manager and go abroad anyway."

"The day you get Tamea into a convent—and that's where she belongs—you are to marry Maisie Morrison and take her to Europe with you. I'll keep an eye on Tamea for you.

"No risk, I assure you. I have a pachydermous hide which her glances may not penetrate. Besides, I've always been singularly intrigued with the idea that one of these bright days I may marry some fine woman and father some blue-eyed, flaxen-haired children."

"You old-fashioned devil!"

"Do not seek with specious compliments to swerve my single-track mind from your *affaire de cœur*. It is understood, then, that you are committed to my plan?"

"Absolutely."

"Fine! Telephone Maisie at once."

Dan hesitated, so Mellenger pressed the push-button that summoned Dan's secretary. "Please get Miss Morrison on the telephone for Mr. Pritchard," he requested.

Maisie was at home and to Dan's suggestion she agreed—not with enthusiasm, but upon the ground of obliging him, of helping him out of a distressing situa-

tion. Mellenger, listening to Dan's replies, managed to patch together a very fair résumé of their conversation, and grinned openly.

"Told you I was a good hand at guessing," he bragged. "Ah, that's a smart girl, that Maisie. She's a diplomat. Got tact—rarest feminine gift. Before you hang up I should like to speak to her."

There was a wait of a few minutes while Maisie urged her aunt to agree to chaperon the party. Presently Maisie called back to say that Mrs. Casson, having communicated by telephone with her husband, would be delighted to accept.

"Falls in with old Casson's mood very nicely," Dan soliloquized. "He's morose and sulky and prefers to be alone." To Maisie: "Mel is in my office, Maisie. He wishes to say a word to you."

"Miss Maisie," Mellenger announced, "I've taken on a new job."

"Indeed?"

"I'm managing Dan Pritchard. The man is bewildered and doesn't know how to manage himself. He's afraid to act with force and decision at home, although down in the office he never hesitates to crack the whip."

"I know. Dan is so tender-hearted. He's afraid his passion-flower will droop and die if he exercises the least bit of authority. If his true friends do not organize——"

"Exactly, Miss Maisie, exactly. You start for Del Monte at two o'clock this afternoon, in Dan's car. You will arrive in time for dinner. Your trunks will follow by express."

"Are you giving orders, Mel?"

"I am."

"I hear you and I obey. Good-by. Thank you."

Mellenger hung up and faced Dan. "Go home and get ready, but before you leave this office, telephone Julia and start her packing."

"You're a fast worker."

"I know a faster one," Mellenger retorted significantly.

CHAPTER XVII

AT a quarter past seven, when Dan Pritchard's limousine drew up in front of the Hotel Del Monte, a white, flannel-clad figure heaved itself out of a chair on the porch, came down the steps and opened the door of the car.

"Good evening, everybody," he greeted Dan's party. "Hello! Mel! You here!"

Mellenger sighed. "One might glean the impression judging by your intonation, that I haven't any right here," he complained. "After leaving your office today I began to feel the downhill pull, so I jumped the two o'clock train and here I am. How do you do, Miss Maisie."

He gave Maisie his hand and assisted her to alight. They exchanged glances and Mellenger felt his hand squeezed just a little. He answered the pressure, was introduced to Mrs. Casson as Dan handed her out on the steps, and immediately turned to greet Tamea.

"Good evening, Your Majesty."

"Good evening, Monsieur Stoneface," Tamea answered, and ignored his outstretched hand. He knew she was not pleased to find him here, and her next

words, spoken in French, clinched this conclusion. "I will make your task an easy one," she challenged. "I have been doing some thinking." She smiled enigmatically. "Oh, I understand you very well, indeed!"

"Yes, I think we understand each other, Tamea. I want you to know, however," he added as they followed Dan, Maisie and Mrs. Casson into the hotel, "that my attitude is perfectly impersonal. I do not dislike you."

"If you understood me there would have been no necessity for that speech. Listen to my words, Stoneface. I——"

"Why do you call me Stoneface?" he interrupted.

"Because to many people your face reveals nothing. It is dull and blank when you would deceive people, but you are not a fool, Stoneface. But you remind me of the tremendous stone images on the coast of Easter Island, with their plain, sad, dull faces turned ever toward the sea as if seeking something that never comes. So you are Stoneface to me."

"And what do I seek?" he demanded.

"You seek in men those qualities which are in you. They are hard to find, Stoneface. And you seek from some woman a love that will give a little in exchange for a great deal. You are a lonely man, Stoneface—always seeking, seldom finding, never satisfied. You see, I have been thinking of you. And I have done some thinking on your words to Dan Pritchard."

"I hope you will not quarrel with me for that."

"It is hard to quarrel with the true friend of him I love, but you are in my way, Stoneface, and you are a resolute man. So I shall not have mercy. Of two women who love your friend, you must, it seems, approve of one. I am not that one. . . . Well, when the gods rain blows on Tamea she will take them standing and none shall know how much they hurt. And you have hurt me, Stoneface. Still, I shall be what you call a good sport. Dan Pritchard has come to this place for a few days to play—with me—and you are here to have him play—with you! Well, Stoneface, I give him to you for those few days because I love him. I would not have his mind distressed with the striving to keep two women happy. I shall not again be of gross manners and embarrass him," she added darkly.

"You feel quite certain of yourself, do you not?"

"Yes. And why not? This girl"—with an infinitesimal shrug of her shoulder she indicated Maisie, who had met a friend in the lobby and was talking to her —"causes me no alarm, so I shall be kind to her."

"I'm the bug in your amber, eh?"

"You must be considered," she admitted.

He laughed.

"Why do you oppose my desires, Stoneface? I am not a black woman, I am not stupid, I have, perhaps, as much beauty as——" And again she shrugged a shoulder at Maisie.

"I am informed," said Mellenger coolly, "that on

your mother's side you are descended from a line of kings who have never mingled their blood with that of the common people."

"That is true."

"I would that my friend refrained from mingling the blood of his children with that of another race, a race that is not white."

She was silent, digesting this unanswerable argument. Then: "Some day, perhaps, Stoneface, you will cast away that argument. Like a child's garment, it will not fit a grown man."

Maisie came toward them. "We will go to our rooms now and dress for dinner, Tamea," she suggested.

When he was alone in the lobby Mark Mellenger sat down in a quiet corner to think. "She bombs one," he complained. "She fairly blows one out of the water. She will not be deferred to nor pitied nor patronized. Realizing why I am here—why I have found it necessary to be here—she renders me futile and my presence unnecessary by changing her tactics. She reads my poker face, and, having read it this evening, she has taken my job away from me and I feel foolish. Judas priest, what a woman! She's perfectly tremendous! Fair and square, hitting straight from the shoulder and with character enough to dislike me intensely. She is adorably feminine and I've got my hands full to defeat her purpose. She isn't going to plead with me to get out of her way, nor is she going to oppose me. She's

just going to ignore me. . . . Well, poor old Dan, I did the best I could by you, at any rate. The idealistic, altruistic dreamer. He's helpless, because this girl possesses a charm that Maisie hasn't got or hasn't developed. Tamea can hear the pipes of Pan. That's it! She can hear them and make men hear them, too."

It did not occur to Mellenger that he liked reedy music.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT dinner Tamea captured a seat beside Dan but gave it up almost instantly to Maisie, giving as a reason her desire to sit beside Mark Mellenger and talk with him. However, she had little to say during the meal. Seemingly she was content to be a good listener.

"Yes, she has been doing some thinking," Mellenger thought. "And she has decided to disarm active opposition by abandoning direct action and fighting under the rules of the game as Maisie and her kind play it. Preëmpted the seat beside Dan and then abandoned it, just to show her power. She's half French and a born coquette."

Suddenly Tamea turned to him as if she had read his thoughts. "I have decided to be all white," she said.

He noted the fascination of her habit of starting a conversation as if it were the continuation of a discussion, her trick of foreshortening words and ideas.

"I commend your decision, Tamea."

"Will you help me, Stoneface?" she pleaded with sad wistfulness.

"No!"

She bowed her head understandingly. . . . When the gods rained blows on Tamea, Queen of Riva, she took them standing, and none might know how much they hurt.

"I hate you—but I respect you," she said in a low voice. "You are a man of resolution, Stoneface."

"I wonder, my dear, if you will believe me when I assure you it is very difficult for me to act in a manner which causes you to dislike me."

"Yes, I know that. If you were unkind because you enjoyed unkindness, Dan Pritchard would not love you."

"Tamea, you have, in full measure, the greatest gift, an understanding heart. In time I shall hope to be understood and—forgiven."

She frowned. "An understanding head might be a better gift. This evening, when I saw you, I understood why you came without telling anybody. And I thought: 'Tamea, you are a little fool. Go back to Riva where your mixed blood does not set you apart from your world. Here it is difficult to know happiness!' "

"That was a sensible thought. Why do you not return to Riva? You are terribly out of place here."

"You, who are all white, cannot understand the combat in my heart, Stoneface. I inherited too much from my father, who was a very wonderful man. I compre-

hend too quickly, I see too clearly and, I think, sometimes, I shall never be very happy. I am a child of love and I—I—well, I am sorry you will not help me know the ways of your people. I shall learn without aid but just now I would make haste. . . . However, I understand."

Her long, beautiful hands lay in her lap—her fingers lacing and interlacing nervously; her face was downcast. Mellenger suspected that her long black lashes, seeming to lie on her rose-ivory cheek, effectually concealed a suspicious moistness. There was about her a sad, gentle, Madonna-like wistfulness more poignant than sorrow. Mellenger was touched.

Presently she raised her head and smiled defiantly. "Perhaps I, too, shall be a Stoneface, searching the sea for that which never comes. Tomorrow what shall we do to make happiness for ourselves?"

"Tomorrow I would like to dedicate to the delightful task of making you happy."

"Then go away. You are not needed here."

"I will go on Monday with Dan in his car. Until then you must endure me."

"Thank you, Stoneface. This is a pretty place with none but fashionable people in it, apparently. I shall learn much here so I shall be dutiful and remain here very quietly with Maisie and Mrs. Casson."

"That will please Dan very much."

"He will think of me while he is away. He will write to me. Perhaps he will think of Maisie too and write to her. If so—very well. It is not nice to play the cat."

CHAPTER XIX

THAT ended the conversation for that night. Tamea retired shortly after dinner, leaving Maisie and Mellenger in possession of the field. The next morning Dan and Mellenger breakfasted early and left for the golf links at Pebble Beach. Maisie, her aunt and Tamea joined them there for luncheon, and in the afternoon Maisie, Dan and Mellenger made up a threesome and played nine holes, with Tamea following, playing the part of the gallery and bored to the point of tears. At a point on the course where one drives along the cliff, Mellenger sliced badly and drove a new ball into the Pacific Ocean. Tamea was frankly delighted. In the evening there was dancing and again Tamea was out of it. She could neither fox-trot nor waltz; she could only gaze wistfully after Dan and Maisie.

Mellenger sat with her. "Do you dance, Stoneface?" she queried.

"Oh, yes!"

"Perhaps you will teach me?"

"When?"

"Now."

"Oh, but a beginner——"

"You do not wish me to dance with Dan Pritchard?"

"I do not."

She nodded. "I have listened to this music and I have watched these others dance. I think I can dance the fox-trot, too. You shall dance with me, Stoneface. I would learn."

"I'll not make a spectacle of myself, Tamea."

"Then I shall. You shall dance with me or I shall dance alone, and when I dance alone others cease dancing to watch me. I will do what you call bust up the show. I will do the *hula!*"

"You win," he declared, and they stood up. Tamea made a false step or two, caught the rhythm and moved away rather easily. As she gathered confidence she improved and they circled the hall without colliding with anybody. "You're an apt pupil," said Mellenger.

"I grow more apt," she retorted—and commenced to dance. In all his days Mark Mellenger had never held in his arms a more wonderful partner. She handled him easily, steering him cleverly among the dancers, moving with a swiftness, a lightness and an abandon both new and thrilling.

"You have danced before?" he charged. "You're marvelous."

"In Tahiti," she admitted. "I had a humor to force you to meet my will. Now I am very weary—so weary

that I shall not dance with Dan Pritchard if he asks me—and he will."

Dan did—and Tamea begged off. Mellenger was immensely amused. "Playing me off against old Dan," he thought. "Well, I think I shall fall in with that mood and play the game. This is getting interesting."

They drove around the seventeen mile drive the following forenoon and had a Spanish luncheon in Monterey; in the afternoon Mark and Dan played eighteen holes of golf while Tamea and Maisie went down to the beach swimming. After dinner Tamea fell into step beside Mellenger as they walked down the long hall and clasped her hand in his, after a childish fashion she had.

"You have been very nice to me today, Stoneface," she admitted. "I think, perhaps, I may learn soon to forget that I dislike you. Do you insist upon going back to the city tomorrow morning?"

"Yes, I'm going back with Dan."

"Please do not go," she whispered, and squeezed his hand a little.

"Why? Why do you ask me to remain, child?"

"Because I shall be lonely here—and if you remain perhaps we may have a nice fight, no? I wish to talk to you—to understand some things. Please?"

She halted him, came close to him and looked up at him in a manner that could not be resisted. Mellenger felt a wild thrill in his heart and it must have registered

in his eyes, for Tamea's great orbs answered thrill for thrill.

"I'll not stay," he almost growled.

"Then walk with me a few minutes in the grounds," she begged. "I must have some conversation with you —alone."

They strolled out and down a graveled path through the trees to a bench Tamea had observed under one of them that day. They sat down. Tamea was first to speak.

"Stoneface, I have done much thinking because of what I heard you tell Dan the other night at his house. I know now how the friends of Dan Pritchard will regard me if he takes me to wife. They will not say, 'Ah, there is that nice wife of his.' No, they will say, 'There is Dan Pritchard and his Kanaka wife.' I shall always be one apart. You have made me very unhappy, Stoneface, but perhaps I should thank you for telling me first. Now I shall not go too far until I know how far I should go."

"I'm so sorry," he murmured humbly. "I didn't mean it for your ears. I wouldn't have said it—then —if I had known you were eavesdropping. You're much too fine, Tamea, to have this happen to you, but I know Dan Pritchard. You are not the woman for him. Maisie Morrison is."

"Perhaps those are true words, Stoneface. I do not know men of your race too well. Yet it is certain that

some day a man will seek me and I will be glad of the seeking. Many have sought me already, but you must understand, Stoneface, they were not gentlemen. Ah, but you do not understand . . . you do not know how much I wish to be all white . . . how my heart hurts because here, where I am alone, I must be alone always because I—am—different."

He was overwhelmed with sympathy and possessed himself of her hand and patted it, but without speaking.

"You like me, do you not, Stoneface?" she pleaded.

"You are wonderful—transcendently beautiful—you have a mind and a heart and a soul."

"And you like me—a very little?"

His grip on her hand tightened. "God help me," he murmured huskily. "I love you. I am like a man smitten with a plague."

"Yes, you love me. I was quite certain of that, only you told me the eyes were not admissible as evidence. You did not think I could stir a heart of stone and see love and longing in Stoneface, no? But I saw it, and I have not wished it, for I have not liked you. And now will I make you humble. You shall seek the love of the woman you would not wish your friend to take to wife—no, no, I dishonor you, Stoneface.

"Forgive, please. You would not seek it, but you shall yearn for it with a great yearning that shall cause you to forget that in my veins flows an ancient and

alien blood. Stoneface, know you that if half of my blood is dark it is not the blood of the unbeautiful or the base. It is the blood of the kings and patriarchs of a lost race that is dying because, in its innocence, it touched hands with the vilest of living things, the white man civilized. No, I am not ashamed of my blood. I am proud of it and I rejoice that it has given me a weapon to humble you."

She grasped his hands and drew him toward her. "Look at me, Stoneface," she commanded. But he turned away his heavy, impassive face. "Ah, look at me," she pleaded now, "and let me see again in those strange, stern eyes the look that was there when you betrayed yourself into my power. For I have power —over men. I know it. It is not to brag, to show a large conceit, when I admit it—to you. . . . Come, look at me, Stoneface."

He looked at her, turning his head slowly, as if it hurt him to move it. There, in the moonlight, in that scented park, her power, her tremendous magnetism, the intoxicating glory of her strange, baffling, childlike but commanding personality made his heart pound and set up in his huge frame a weak trembling. Had he possessed the power to think, this spell she had cast upon him, all within the space of seventy-two hours, would not have been possible of analysis. Perhaps the best explanation was the one he had already given—that he was as a man suddenly smitten with a plague.

"You tremble, Stoneface."

"That is because I am weak, Tamea, and I am ashamed of my weakness. I, who came to scoff, remain to pray."

"That is my desire. I would have you, of all men, suffer as you have made me suffer. I shall make of you a great stone idol, with stony face turned sadly to the sea, like those colossal figures on the coast of Easter Island. Yes, Stoneface. Now you may gaze long for that which never comes. I am avenged."

She dropped his hands and with her own clasped tight against her tumultuous breast she looked at him with eyes that blazed with emotion. Mellenger sighed deeply and then his heavy, almost dull face lighted with a smile so tender the plain face was glorified.

"And when the gods rain blows upon me, O Tamea, I, too, shall take them standing and smiling. You have called me Stoneface. Very well. I withdraw my opposition. I would have you happy, even at the price of my old friend's unhappiness, even at the sacrifice of my own. But I shall not gaze out to sea for that which never comes. For it shall come. And when I see you bent and broken and taking the blows with your flower face in the dust——"

Her glorious face softened. "Then what, Stoneface? Then what?"

"Then," he murmured huskily, "I shall weep. But I shall also lift you up and hold you to my heart and

love you, and my love shall endure in the days when you are old, and perhaps fat, when your beauty shall be but a memory. Yes, Tamea, when you too are a Stoneface gazing sadly out to sea for that which came —and went—and shall never, never come again, I shall love you and love you the more because your child's heart will have been broken. You will, perhaps, remember this when you need a friend."

He left her there and went away, with hands outstretched a little before him, like one who walks in darkness and is afraid.

CHAPTER XX

IN the morning Mellenger was gone. He left a note to Dan explaining that he had received a sudden and wholly unexpected call to return to San Francisco and begged Dan to present his compliments to the ladies and to express his regret at an unceremonious departure.

"The man's a poor slave," Dan declared.

Tamea, who had been at his elbow as he read, inquired: "Who?"

"Mellenger. He has left us."

"Ah," Tamea breathed—thoughtfully. After a brief silence she said: "Then Maisie will have an opportunity to play with you. I am glad Mellengair has gone."

"Tamea, you mustn't hold a grudge against my friend Mark. He is not an enemy of yours."

"An enemy conquered is no longer an enemy, Dan. I do not hold the grudge. I have taken my vengeance on that man for the hurt he has done me, and I am content to forget him."

"But you'll always be pleasant and courteous to him when you meet him at my house?"

"*Certainement.*"

"Sorry you cannot play golf, or we'd make it a threesome, Tamea."

"What man would be delayed and annoyed in his sports by an unlearned woman? I have letters to write to friends in Riva and Tahiti, so go you with Maisie."

Dan was glad to accept an invitation so heartily extended. He had a feeling that, in the delicate operation of remaining strictly neutral, he had neglected Maisie; he felt that Maisie sensed the neglect. With a light heart and a beaming smile, therefore, he sought her out and drove off with her to the golf links at Pebble Beach. They played eighteen holes and had luncheon at the Lodge, and not once during the day did either refer to Tamea, her future or her avowed attitude toward her guardian.

Late in the afternoon they drove down the Monterey County coast. Dan could not recall an occasion when Maisie had been more delightful in conversation or more winsome as to personal appearance. She appeared to have fallen suddenly into a habit he had not previously noted, that of adjusting herself to his moods. Throughout that drive there were long, blissful silences when Maisie observed his head sunk on his breast and the dreamer's look in his troubled eyes; when he saw fit to toss her a conversational bone she seized it eagerly and managed to extract from it a surprising quantity of red meat. He was thrilled with a new sense of the girl's potentialities for comradeship and sympathy, for abrupt and infallible understanding. Today she made no attempt to dominate him, to en-

compass and envelop him in the aura of her penchant for leadership, for direction. And he liked that quite as much as he disliked criticism, whether expressed or implied. Had Maisie at last sensed what had been keeping them apart for so long—his repugnance to the slightest suggestion of a hindrance to his masculine freedom? He pondered this.

Dan wished that women viewed men and their affairs from a more masculine point of view. He wished that they did not have such a tendency to condemn without trial by jury, as it were. He deplored their prompt and definite acting on instinct or intuition, and he wished that the girl he might desire ardently to marry should be possessed of a modicum of the sportsmanship of a very gallant gentleman. Why did they dislike each other so on sight? Why did they provoke silly little tiffs over nothing in particular; and why, when they were not on speaking terms with each other, did they decline to avoid the embarrassment of a meeting, as men do? Why were they controlled by their emotions? How difficult of understanding they were!

Well, at any rate, Tamea appeared to have a fairly well developed sense of sportsmanship, for she had deliberately abdicated today in favor of her rival, and Dan thought that was mighty decent of her. She had a definite philosophy, and, it seemed to him, she could smother an active dislike and not develop the

remotest indications of a soul convulsion. Poor child! He wondered if he had been quite kind in leaving her to amuse herself all day at the hotel.

He shifted his position and his hand fell, not by design, on top of Maisie's. Instantly her soft, warm fingers closed over it. The touch thrilled him pleasurably; he wanted to hold Maisie's hand, so soft and small and fragile; he did not want her to hold his. So he removed his hand from hers and she drew away from him.

"Ah, don't," he murmured. "I didn't mean that," and his arm went up and around her neck, deliberately, possessively. She leaned toward him and he felt her tremble. "This has been a wonderful, wonderful day," he said huskily. "It's been one of those rare days that upthrust themselves for years in one's dearest memories. You're such a bully little comrade, Maisie. I'm getting quite wild about you, dear," and he kissed her tenderly on the cheek closest to him and patted the other cheek.

Her eyes were starry with love; she snuggled closer to him and laid her head in the hollow of his shoulder. "I'm glad you wanted to play with me today, old dear," she whispered. "I've been so happy. I was afraid, when I heard Mark Mellenger had left early this morning, that you would attempt the impossible task of spreading yourself over too much territory. I

don't think I could have stood more than nine holes with Tamea along for a gallery."

"Score one for Tamea there," he blurted undiplomatically. "She declined to come with us."

She raised her head and looked out of the window. "Oh," she breathed, "so you *did* ask her!"

He was suddenly annoyed. "No, I did not, Maisie. She was the first to suggest that I take you golfing."

"Indeed! What magnanimity! I wonder why."

"She said she had some letters to write."

"Her letters could have waited. She had some other reason. I do not relish being the recipient of her—of her—forbearance and generosity. I'll not be patronized by that barbarian."

He was furious. "I'm sorry you mentioned her name," he retorted. "*I* have carefully refrained all day long from doing so."

"Why?"

"Maisie, that eternal 'why?' of yours grows provoking. You make me feel like a cadaver on a dissecting table."

"You're mixed in your metaphor, my dear Dan," she replied with a small clink of ice in her tones. "Your statement that you have carefully refrained, all day long, from mentioning Tamea's name to me seems to imply an impression on your part that such mention would be distasteful to me. I have a normal, healthy feminine curiosity, so I asked you why. If one would

ascertain information, one must make inquiries, I'm sure."

"Well, you didn't mention her name, and that seemed a bit queer. I merely bowed to what I gathered was your unspoken wish."

"How silly! Why, I didn't refer to the girl today because I never once thought of her today—until just now. Why should I think of her? She doesn't interest me in the least, Dan."

"I'm glad to know that. I had a sneaking impression she did interest you—vitally."

"You amazing man! Now, why should she?"

"There you go," he declared furiously, "driving me into a corner and forcing me to say crazy things so you will not have to say them. How like a woman!"

She laughed softly. Evidently she was enjoying his discomfiture immensely. "Don't evade the issue, Dan. Why did you have that sneaking impression that Tamea did interest me—vitally?"

"Well, after that night Mel was up to dinner—that was a bit awkward, you know. And you two do not like each other."

"If you mean that I decline to fall on that young hussy's neck and make over her——"

"Don't call her a hussy, Maisie. That doesn't sound like you, and besides, she isn't a hussy. She's a poor, lonely, misunderstood young girl and——"

"And making desperate love to you," Maisie taunted him.

"Well," he chuckled, "that doesn't annoy me particularly. In fact I feel complimented." Maisie winced. There was a note of sincerity in his tone that robbed it of any hint of badinage. Dan continued: "The fact that she is making desperate love to me—it would be useless and stupid to endeavor to hide that fact—seemed to me to constitute sufficient ground for my suspicion that you would prefer not to discuss her."

Maisie turned abruptly and faced him with wide, curious eyes. There was cleverly simulated amusement in those sea-blue orbs, and Dan's train of thought running his single-track mind was completely ditched.

"Indeed, Dan, my dear old friend, what possible interest could I have in anything Tamea does—with you or any other man? You say you are complimented. Perhaps you may even be delighted. I'm sure I do not know, and I'm not sufficiently interested to inquire. It hasn't occurred to me to take you or Tamea or your love-making at all seriously."

He was crushed. "I see I've made a star-spangled monkey of myself," he said gloomily.

"Oh, say not so, old boy!" Maisie bantered. She had him down in his corner now; a little more battering and he would be counted out. "Have you been indulging in some day-dreams, Dan?"

He nodded, and she laid her little hand on his fore-

arm with an adorable look of simulated interest, tenderness and banter. With a fascinating uplift and outthrust of her lovely chin, Maisie said: "Tell Auntie about it."

"Oh, don't annoy me. You're a most provoking woman."

"Do please tell, Dan'l. I'm that cur'ous."

"Well, I suppose I might as well. It appears I have laid the flattering unction to my soul that you loved me."

"Yes?" Maisie barely cooed the word.

"And you do not."

"How do you know, old snarleyow?"

"I'm not exactly feeble-minded."

"No, indeed. I think you're a high-grade moron. At least, you act like one. Now, I want to know how you could possibly have gathered the impression that I am in love with you."

"I cannot answer that query, Maisie. I only know that very recently I began to think you did."

"You take too much for granted, Dan. Why didn't you ask me to make certain?"

"It's not too late, Maisie." He was desperate—afraid of Tamea and what might happen to him if he did not forestall her by some definite strategy—fearful of being "spoofed" so outrageously by Maisie for a minute longer. In her present mood, half childish, half devilish, wholly womanish, Maisie held a tremen-

dous lure for him. Indeed, the environment was ideal for such a situation. There was the blue sea out beyond them, with the white waves breaking on a white beach; their little subdued thunder as they broke, and then the mournful swish as the broken water raced up the shingle, had a particularly soothing effect upon him. It stimulated his imagination. On the mountains to their right the blue sunset haze still lingered; cock quails were calling to their families to "Come right home, come right home," and somewhere over in the chapparal a cowbell tinkled melodiously. Why, the man who could ride with Maisie Morrison in such surroundings and not feel his pulse throb with desire for love and contentment was fit for treason, stratagems and spoils.

With a mighty sigh he said: "Well, Maisie, do you?"

Alas! The blundering idiot had neglected to postulate his monumental query with a plain, blunt assertion of his own love for her. Maisie, being what she was, could never by any possibility admit anything now. She would not have him think of her in the years to come as a brazen woman who had proposed to him —that she had been at all *gauche*. So she looked him coolly in the eyes with a glance that did not conceal the fact that she was irritated profoundly; with a certain silky waspishness she gave him his answer.

"Well, not particularly, Dan."

Fell a silence. Maisie, glancing sidewise at her victim, observed him gulp. There was a momentary flush and then Dan took up the annunciator and said very distinctly to Graves:

"Step on it, Graves. I think the county motorcycle officer has gone home to dinner. At any rate, if we're arrested I'll pay the fine."

Graves nodded and the car leaped to forty-five miles an hour. "I have a special arrangement with Graves," Dan continued, turning to Maisie as calmly as if his heart were beating at its normal rate of seventy-six, full and strong. "Unless instructions to the contrary are given him, his orders from me are to obey the traffic laws. If he is arrested in the absence of such instructions to the contrary, he pays his own fine. Under any other circumstances, I pay it."

"Fair enough," Maisie answered, with a near approach to slang which, coming from her, was rather delightful. To herself she said: "What a charming old idiot he is! I've gotten him quite fussed and he is in a hurry to get back to the hotel so he can go to his room and sulk. Well, he almost proposed that time. I wonder if I wasn't just a little bit too feminine with him. I had an opportunity and failed to take advantage of it. . . . Oh well, he shall propose again before the night is over, and this time . . ."

Dan was humming a crazy little lumber-jack song:

Oh, the Olson boys they built a shingle mill,
They built it up on the side of a hill,
They worked all night and they worked all day,
And they tried to make the old mill pay.
And—by heck—they couldn't!

So the Olson boys just took that shingle mill,
And turned it into a whisky still;
They worked all night and they worked all day,
And tried to make the old still pay.
And—by heck—they done it!

The golden moment had, indeed, passed. Maisie made one heroic attempt at a rally. "Well?" she queried.

"Well, what?" Dan demanded.

"What we were discussing a moment ago."

"I make a motion that we lay that motion on the table, Maisie."

"The motion's denied."

"Well, a motion to lay on the table is not debatable. The question must be put to a vote. All those in favor of laying on the table will vote aye. Contrary minded—no!"

"No!" said Maisie.

"Aye!" boomed Daniel. "The ayes have it and it is so ordered."

"Steam roller tactics," Maisie protested and laughed to conceal her chagrin. She had obeyed the instinct of her sex, which is to flee from the male, even while ob-

sessed with the desire to be overtaken. She had yielded to the feminine impulse to chastise him for his clumsiness in love-making, to play with him awhile, as a cat plays with a mouse, before claiming the poor victim. She wanted him to be rough and resolute, to thrust aside her protestations and claim her by brute force and the right of discovery. She was very happy and she had desired to linger a brief moment in the afterglow of her decision to surrender to him—before surrendering. She wanted to be deferred to, to have him plead with her for her love, to deluge her with a swift avalanche of love words. How could she confess her yearning for him until he had laid at her feet the wondrous burden of his own great love and asked her, humbly, to accept the gift in exchange for her own?

Maisie had never really had a sweetheart before. She was a girl of the type that has a cool habit of keeping amorous youths at arm's length. Unlike so many of her girl friends, she could not bear to be pawed over by youths who failed to arouse in her the slightest interest. She had never sought conquest for the sake of conquest, although all of her life she had hugged to her heart an ideal of love. She would marry the one great love of her life, and having married, she would devote her life to making her husband happy and comfortable. She would bear children for him; she would keep herself young and fresh; she would not do any of the stupid things she frequently observed

young matrons in her set doing to their husbands—driving them crazy by daily, almost hourly, demands for renewed, fervid assurances of undying love; tagging after them always, herding them in, cutting them off from healthy association with other harassed males, protesting against everything not connected with the office and the home.

For Maisie was, without anybody close to her remotely suspecting it, a tremendously romantic young woman. She yearned with a great yearning to be wooed by a romantic lover who was fifty per cent slave and fifty per cent Prince Charming. Long before she had ever fallen in love with Dan Pritchard she had fallen in love with love; hence her automatic resentment of Dan Pritchard's peculiar approach to the Great Adventure. Having shyly hidden within herself all her life, how could she expose her heart to Dan merely to satisfy his accursed curiosity? What assurance had she that he would, in turn, expose his heart to her? Moreover, wasn't it his first move, the monumental *omadhaun!* Maisie smiled sweetly, but what she really wanted to do to Dan Pritchard was to slap him furiously and then cry herself to silence and forgiveness in his arms.

"Well, pride comes before a fall," Dan answered her lugubriously.

"You weren't so *very* proud," Maisie assured him, with a forgiving glance.

"Perhaps. But that didn't soften my fall."

"I think perhaps you were quite within your rights in asking," she pursued eagerly. "You've known me so long and we've always been such good pals, I suppose you concluded——"

"Yes, yes," he interrupted. "I'm so glad you understand. Well, I'll not embarrass you again, my dear. You're much too sweet and lovely to have my silly action of a few minutes ago cast a shadow over our perfect friendship."

"I'll have to propose to him after all," Maisie thought. And she would have done it if a car hadn't come up behind them and with a hoarse toot warned them of a desire to pass. Maisie could not bring herself to speak at that moment. One does not desire to hint of one's love to the accompaniment of a motor siren. And to complicate matters Graves glanced back quickly, measured at a glance the speed limit of the following car, and proceeded to run away from it. This infuriated the driver of the other car, who in turn speeded up and continued to honk at them until Graves turned in at the entrance to the hotel grounds and, before Maisie could renew the conversation, had paused before the portals of the hotel and was standing beside the car holding the door open.

As Dan helped her out of the limousine she squeezed his hand and favored him with a look of abject adoration.

"I know, dear," he whispered. "I shouldn't have presumed. It is sweet of you to forgive me."

Maisie ran quickly to her room, cast herself upon her bed and sought surcease from her rage and chagrin in that soothing form of feminine comfort known as "a good cry." Indeed, she wept so long and so hard that she decided she was too red and swollen of eye and nose to venture forth where Tamea would see her. So she sent down word by her maid that she had developed a severe headache, as a result of the hard day in the sun, and would have dinner in her room.

CHAPTER XXI

TAMEA, secretly delighted at Maisie's misfortune, expressed to Mrs. Casson and Dan a concern about Maisie which she was far from feeling. Maisie had had him all day, and it had been Tamea's generous thought to abandon the evening to her rival. However, since fate had willed otherwise, she decided promptly to make the most of her opportunity. After dinner she managed to locate a bridge game with one partner missing. The players were acquaintances of Mrs. Casson's and it was no trick at all for Tamea to steer her chaperon into this vacancy; whereupon she took Dan's arm and wandered with him down into the art gallery. There was nothing in the art gallery that Dan could cheer for, and Tamea quickly discovered this. Almost before he knew it, she had him outside and was walking him through the scented starlit night down the road toward Monterey Bay.

As they walked Tamea attempted no conversation. Instinctively she realized that Dan did not want that. He had something on his mind and it was depressing him. What he needed, therefore, was love and sympathy and song; whereat Tamea twined her long soft fingers in his, swung his hand as they walked and commenced softly, very softly, to sing a song of Riva. It

must have been a love song, for although Dan Pritchard could not understand a word of it, yet in the soft succession of syllables he caught a hint of passion, of longing, of pathos. . . . Once when, apparently, Tamea had a half rest in her music, she raised his hand to her lips before resuming her crooning love lullaby.

They came to a wooden bench on a low bluff, against which the waves beat at extreme high tides. They sat down, Tamea still holding Dan's hand. She released it long enough for him to light a cigar, then she drew his arm around her neck and laid her cheek against his. She continued to sing and like a modern Circe she wove her spell about him.

Suddenly she ceased, placed one hand on his cheek and tilted his face toward her.

"*Chéri,*" she whispered, "I love you with all my heart and soul."

He stared at her incredulously. He seemed to be thinking of something else—and he was. He was thinking how different—this—from his experience of that afternoon with Maisie.

"But," Tamea continued sadly, and let her hand fall back into her lap, "my *chéri* does not love his Tamea. She is half Kanaka."

"Hush, child," he admonished. "I have never thought of you as anything save as one of God's most glorious creations."

"But," Tamea persisted, "it makes a great difference

—to be half Kanaka. It makes a great difference to a white man like you."

"It doesn't make the slightest difference, sweetheart," he cried, and wondered why he had called her sweetheart. His heart was pounding now, there was a drumming in his ears, he was atremble with the trembling that had shaken him as a zephyr shakes the leaves of a forest that evening on the Moorea after old Gaston had departed for Paliuli and the girl had clung to him, weeping and despairing. "You're wonderful, glorious," he continued, his words outpouring in a sort of rapturous jumble and mumble, and swept her into his arms. Their lips met . . . Tamea could kiss.

"Then you love your Tamea—truly, dear one?" she whispered finally.

"I adore you."

"And you will not wed Maisie, even though you are engaged to her?"

"I am not engaged to Maisie and never have been. What's more, I never shall be, Tamea. No man could marry a more wonderful woman than Maisie, but unfortunately for me, Maisie isn't the least bit in love with me."

Tamea started, drew away from him and eyed him wonderingly.

"You are wrong, dear one. Maisie adores you."

He shook his head. "I asked her—once," he explained. "She assured me she did not."

"She assured you of that which is not true, Dan Pritchard. Now why should she do this? The women of your country are strange women, love of my heart. They deny that which they feel. They pretend to be interested in that which bores them. They desire a husband, yet they shrink from taking him, even after he has looked upon them with the look that no true woman should mistake.

"I do not understand this. I wanted you, dear one, and when you looked upon me with favor I came to you. And I am very happy—so happy, perhaps, that when we are married and I have borne children for you, I may forget that I am not exactly that which you would wish me to be.

"But I shall learn, dear one. And I shall obey my lord because he is my master and I love him."

He stood up and held her tightly to his heart that was pounding so madly, so rapturously. He rained kisses on her upturned flower face, and the perfume of her glorious hair was as myrrh and incense to him. "You've bewitched me, Tamea," he muttered hoarsely. "Come, let us go back to the hotel. Come!"

They went. Tamea knew better than to oppose a man. She knew that men love best the women who give them their own way, who do not seek to restrain or discipline or mold them to their own desires. Daughter of a race that would disappear before emerging from the condition of family life where there is

neither marrying nor giving in marriage for the avoidance of sin and the preservation of property rights, Tamea was following woman's truest and most primitive instinct. She was ruling by love and not by the sad and silly principle that possession is nine points of the law.

Young as she was, Tamea was a fully developed woman, watchful, observant, philosophical, courageous, resourceful; she had the gift, rare in a woman, of initiative and instantaneous power of decision. Gaston of the Beard had richly endowed her with the treasures of his massive mind. She realized that she had swept Dan Pritchard off his feet, that he was her slave, but that his servitude was not as yet wholly voluntary. And she knew why. He was mentally hobbled by the knowledge of her island blood and a vision of Maisie Morrison.

But Tamea was not dismayed. She had faith in her power—in the power of love—to make him forget both. In the belief that he had been pledged to Maisie she had decided gallantly to surrender him to Maisie that day. She had told herself that if Maisie desired him, then, that day, she would make certain of him, and if she did not, then was she a fool. Well, she had not closed her deal, wherefore here was a fair field and no favor. Tamea told herself that she had acted with a degree of sportsmanship pleasing to Dan; and now, when from Dan's own lips she learned that Maisie had

denied her love for him, Tamea had promptly renewed the campaign; like a good soldier she had taken the offensive and, as usually occurs in offensive campaigns, she had won. She had felt Dan Pritchard's wild kisses on her lips, her cheek, her hair, and she was content.

Had Tamea been more conversant with Nordic custom, had she even a remote conception of the holding power of the marriage vow even in a land where thinking people speak learnedly of a divorce problem, she would have urged upon Dan the desirability of motoring into Monterey that night and getting married. It is probable that she would have urged this anyhow had she the slightest fear of Maisie as a rival. All anxiety on that point had now disappeared, however; on the morrow she would set herself to the task of making friends with Maisie. . . . Meanwhile, if her heart's desire persisted in striding back to the hotel without speaking to her, who was she to obtrude upon his mood? Instinctively she realized that men resent intrusions upon their moods of depression or deep thoughtfulness. Her father had been like that.

A white bench, gleaming through the cypress and fir trees down a path that led off at right angles, caught her eye. She steered him toward it, but he balked and shook his head in negation.

"You will come, dear one," Tamea cooed.

"No, no," he cried huskily. "Do not tempt me, Tamea." And he moved a few feet. When he looked

back she was standing where he had left her and her arms were outstretched to him. "No, I tell you," he protested, and hurried away from her. So Tamea walked down the little path and sat down on the bench to await his return.

He returned to her. She knew he would.

"You are thinking, dear one, of what your friend Mellengair said to you about me," she challenged. "You are thinking of the danger to a great white man to mate with a half-breed Kanaka."

"Please," he pleaded. "I wasn't thinking of that at all."

"Then you were wondering what Maisie would think —what she will say when you tell her how it is with us two."

"I—I do not think I shall tell her—yet."

Tamea's breast heaved and her dark eyes flashed. "Then I will tell her, Dan. What have we to conceal? Maisie means nothing in my young life," she added, tossing in a colloquialism she had picked up, the Lord knows where. "Why do you fear?"

"I do not fear."

"I am glad to hear you say so. I should not love you if you were afraid of anything."

"Ah, but I am afraid of something, Tamea dear. I am afraid I do not love you, with a sufficiently great love to marry you. Perhaps that which I think is love is not really love, but passion."

She laughed softly. Such fine distinctions were too difficult for her to fathom. "What is love without passion?" she protested, "and what an unlovely thing would be passion without love. Fear not, beloved. All is well with that dear heart of yours, and even if it should be that you do not love me too well—that some day your love should grow cold and you should leave me—still would I ask of you tonight all the love of which you are capable. Is it not better to have known a little happiness than none at all? I think so. For look you, dear one. When the parting comes—if come it should as Mellengair foretold that night—you will leave me as you came to me—in love. What manner of fool is the woman who would strive to hold a man whose love has grown cold and dim like the stars at dawn? When you weary of me, Dan Pritchard, you will tell me; then, because I shall always love you, I will prove my love; I will send you away with a smile and a kiss. Ah, sweetheart, will that day ever come? I think not. I think I shall never grow old or stale or intolerable to you."

"Never," he promised, profoundly touched by her sweetness, her candor and amazing magnetism. "You are driving me mad with longing for you, Tamea."

"And I am driving you mad against your will?"

He nodded.

Tamea actually chuckled, took his none too handsome, solemn face between her two palms and looked

at him long, earnestly and impersonally, as one looks at an infant. She appeared to be puzzling something out in her unspoiled mind.

"Such men as have sought me heretofore," she said presently—"and I have not been without attraction to several—have desired me—well, you understand. There was that in their eyes that frightened me or disgusted me and I would have none of them. I could read their hearts. They said of me: 'Ah, here is a half-caste maid. She is like the others—a trusting, silly half-caste, without pride or dignity. I will amuse myself with her.' But you are different, *chéri*. It is not a woman you seek, but a woman with a soul. I think I love you best because you are a gentleman. I have not had many advantages, but something calls out in me here"—she beat her breast—"to be different, that I may be beloved by such as you."

He murmured helplessly: "Well, I'll be damned!"

"Possibly. Your white world is a strange world, with many things and many customs that damn one—particularly a woman. Yet would I follow you to damnation. Would you follow me?"

"I don't know, Tamea. It requires courage for a white man to quarrel with his white world—that is, such a white man as am I. Some of us choose unhappiness rather than affront our world, you know."

"Yes, I think I understand. That is your Christian religion. It teaches strange things, such as duty, and

the battle against sin. It is something that makes one unhappy, uncertain, filled with many fears. It causes men and women to be unhappy in this life that they may be happy in a life to come. The missionary's wife in Riva explained it to me—and I laughed. I told her I would be happy in this, the only life I know I shall know, and she grew angry and said I was a hopeless heathen."

Tamea's silvery little chuckle tinkled faintly on his ear like a distant sheep bell. He hadn't the slightest objection to spooning with Tamea, but his natural refinement rebelled at a park bench. He felt like a country lover; he wanted to go back to the hotel; he feared some one of the guests might see them and start some silly gossip.

"Let us return to the hotel," he blurted out bluntly. "Mrs. Casson will be wondering what has become of us."

Tamea raised his hand and looked at his wrist watch. "We will sit here and talk until midnight," she declared. "Two hours. It is little enough."

"Impossible, Tamea. We will get ourselves talked about. Of course I can stand it, but you——"

"I can stand it too, dear Dan. Sit down, do!"

"Tamea! Please be sensible."

The Queen of Riva stamped her foot. "You will place your arms around me and speak to me of our love," she commanded.

He obeyed. Nevertheless, while he held her to his breast and whispered to her warm words of love; while his heart poured forth its passion and longing and ecstasy so poignant it was almost pain, the vision of Mellenger obtruded.

He was making a mistake. What his personal opinion of an alliance with Tamea might be mattered not. His friends, the code of his class, forbade the banns; and the realization of this brought him uneasiness and unhappiness even in the midst of his wild happiness. He feared for the future. Tonight the world appeared to stand still in space, but tomorrow it would continue to revolve, and unless he took a very brave and resolute stand, it would move on toward a tragedy.

However, he had sufficient sense, now that he found himself involved with this tropic wild flower, to attempt the exercise of his undoubted power over her to the end that he might outline definite plans for her future and secure her acquiescence in them. He reverted, therefore, to her father's plans for her education and reminded Tamea that he had promised her father to see to it that the latter's plans were carried out. He impressed upon her the vital necessity for acquiring as much education, knowledge of the world and refinement, as white girls of her age. She must have music lessons, she must learn to dance, to ride, to drive a motor-car, to manage a household, to sing, to meet

his white friends on their own social level. In a word she must make him very proud of her.

Tamea agreed to obey him implicitly, but fought desperately against the idea of a convent. She pleaded to be permitted to live at Dan's house and have private tutors; she reminded him that she was amply able to afford them. When he explained to her the impossibility of this he saw that she accepted his explanation as something irrelevant and immaterial and decidedly peculiar. Reluctantly she abandoned her stand and sought a compromise. If she went to a convent all week could she come home of week-ends? Dan said she could not. Then would he come to the convent to see her on Sundays? He promised to do this every Sunday, and thus the momentous issue was settled. Tamea promised to enter the convent the day after their return to San Francisco.

This was the first long, uninterrupted confidential conversation they had ever had. Dan was an understanding and sympathetic listener with sufficient patience to continue answering childish questions long after the majority of his sex would have become irritated. And Tamea asked him hundreds of questions on an amazing variety of topics; she discussed intimately the principal features of her own life and extracted the last shred of information he had to give concerning himself. He observed how clear, direct and straightforward was her method of reasoning; she

had a nicely balanced choice of words, and a fascinating habit of clothing her odd fancies in brilliant, brief, illuminating metaphor or simile. In those two hours when Tamea talked to him, with her head on his breast, he really began to know her; and to the spell which her physical beauty had cast upon him was now added an ardent admiration for her mental equipment. She possessed none of the flightiness, frivolity or empty-headedness of the white flapper. To her, life was something very, very real, something to be studied, considered and not to be tasted indiscriminately. She had inherited from her father an insatiable yearning for information on every subject that interested her remotely.

It was twelve-thirty before Dan, with a start, cast off his thraldom and looked at his watch.

"Yes, I suppose we should go in," Tamea said softly. "I have had my delight spoiled for half an hour in the fear that you would look at your watch. And now you have looked at it and the suspense is over."

They walked slowly back to the hotel and came in the front entrance. In the lobby of the hotel they came across Maisie reading a magazine.

"Hello, Maisie, my dear," said Dan, "I had an impression you had a bad headache and had retired. If I had remotely suspected you had recovered we would have remained to keep you company."

Maisie acknowledged this cheerful salutation with a

forced smile. Her eyes were cold and blue. "You must have taken a long walk, Dan. Were you in to Monterey?"

"No, just down to the beach and back. The night is so balmy we've been sitting outside. Tamea has been asking questions and I have been answering them."

"I had so many to ask," said Tamea demurely, "that it was very late when I finished." She patted her mouth to stifle a little yawn. "I'm so sleepy. Excuse me, please, Maisie. I am going to my room. Good night, Dan, you darling. Good night, Maisie."

Dan escorted her to the elevator, then returned to Maisie and sat down beside her. Said she, coolly:

"Well, Dan, did Tamea propose to you tonight?"

On the instant he was irritated. He scowled at Maisie who, disdaining an answer, reached over on his left shoulder and carefully brushed away a very noticeable white patch on the blue cloth of his coat.

"I've told Tamea several times not to use so much powder," she complained.

Dan was aware that he was flushing very noticeably. When Maisie spoke again the flush deepened.

"Aren't you too old for that sort of thing—with that sort of semi-developed girl, Dan?"

He knew that Maisie, coming downstairs for some purpose earlier in the evening and learning from her aunt that he and Tamea had strolled away together, had decided to sit where she could keep watch over

both entrances and await their return. What business had she spying upon them? He was distinctly irritated.

"I must confess, Maisie, I do not relish——" he began, but Maisie interrupted him.

"Oh, I dare say you're thinking I'm an old snooper and that this is none of my business. I'd be prepared to admit that if you had not asked me to look after the child here. If you wish to have yourselves talked about, why then, spooning around the hotel grounds until twelve-thirty o'clock is a very good way."

"Tamea is perfectly safe with me," he defended, "and you ought to know it."

"I do. With any woman you have as much boldness as a canary bird, my dear. What I object to, Dan, is the fact that you are not perfectly safe with Tamea, and we might as well have an understanding regarding her now as later. If you're to be her guardian you cannot afford to let her vamp you. As one of your very oldest and dearest friends I'm going to take the liberty of painting you a picture of the future. I feel certain you cannot see the future clearly, Dan, or else you refuse to see it. May I speak very plainly, Dan?"

"What's the use, Maisie? Mel has already painted me the same picture and I disagree with his color tones. I think I know what I am doing and I think, also, that one of the rarest gifts God ever grants to

civilized woman is a nicely balanced diplomacy. They have too much or too little."

It was Maisie's turn to flush now—with embarrassment and anger. The flush departed, leaving her pale and trembling. "The first bearer of unwelcome news hath but a losing office," she forced herself to say. "Are you driving back to town in the morning, Dan?"

He nodded.

"I think it would be just as well if you took Tamea with you," Maisie continued icily. "Aunt and I will remain here for a few weeks. I do not feel quite up to the task of helping you with Tamea when you decline to help me to help you to help her."

"Oh, Maisie, I'm sorry——"

"Of course you are. And you'll be much sorrier some day, old dear. I may not have much of a gift for diplomacy, Dan, but it does not require the gift of second sight to see that you are madly infatuated with this girl, and common sense is as far from an infatuated man as the north pole from the south. When you come to your senses send for me—should you feel that you need me. Meanwhile—good night and—good-by until we meet again."

He was furious. He had assimilated smilingly one terrific blow from Maisie within the past twelve hours and now he was forced to assimilate another. He rose and bowed to Maisie with polite frigidity.

"You are perfectly right, Maisie," he assured her.

"I am, beyond question, the most monumental ass in all California. Fortunately for both of us, I was just about to inform you that Tamea has consented to enter a convent immediately; consequently she no longer assumes the proportions of a white elephant to both of us. I shall take her home with me tomorrow and place her in school the day after. I am deeply grateful to you for all that you have done for me in this emergency, Maisie, and I am sincerely sorry my conduct has been displeasing to you. It has been eminently satisfactory to myself! Good night and—since I shall not see you before I leave tomorrow morning—*au revoir*. When I need you again I shall not, however, send for you. I am already too deep in your debt. Good night."

Maisie managed her leave-taking admirably. A little nod, a cold and twisted smile—and she was gone. The instant the elevator deposited her on her floor, however, she fairly ran to her room, nor did she observe that the door to Tamea's room was opened ever so little; that Tamea's eye was at that crack and that the tears that rained down Maisie's cheeks had not escaped that keen scrutiny.

"I am right," Tamea soliloquized as she switched off her bedside lamp and slipped into bed. "Maisie loves him. She was too sure of him and that is a mistake. No woman should be too sure of any man because all men are children. After I left Dan with her they

quarreled. That is well. Dan is not ashamed of me, then. Now Maisie weeps. That is well, too."

The telephone tinkled faintly and Tamea took down the telephone.

"How do you do?" said Tamea cordially into the mouthpiece.

"Dan speaking, Tamea. I am going back to San Francisco tomorrow morning and you are to accompany me."

"But Maisie and her aunt remain here?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"I am a very wonderful girl. I am smart—yes, you bet." Her triumphant, musical little chuckle was soothing to his scarred soul.

"Julia will be in your room at six o'clock to awaken you and pack your suitcase and trunk. Good night, my dear."

"I kiss you once—for luck," said Tamea and smacked her lips loudly. Then she hung up, snuggled down in bed and fell asleep almost instantly. She had started the day with a handicap, but her finish had been magnificent and she was well content.

CHAPTER XXII

TAMEA was awakened by Julia at six o'clock. At seven she and Dan breakfasted together; at seven-thirty they entered Dan's limousine, the smiling Julia tucked the robe in around her charge, took her seat beside Graves, and the homeward hegira began. At San José they looked in on the Mother Superior of a splendid convent that catered to the educational needs of young ladies of high school age, and Dan made arrangements to enter Tamea there the following day.

And this he did. Tamea had quite a wild weeping spell at the parting and Dan had to promise to write to her daily. Then the necessity for abandoning Julia was provocative of another outburst of grief, and to add to the complications this proof of devotion so touched Julia, all unused to such appreciation, that she wept loudly and copiously and was pathetically homely after two minutes of it. Dan, aware that all incoming and outgoing mail would be censored at this convent, realized that he faced daily the awful task of composing an innocuous little letter to Tamea, and he was troubled with the thought that Tamea might not understand and go into open revolt as a result.

Finally the ordeal was over and Dan motored back to San Francisco. Here he discovered that there was trouble in the Seattle office of Casson and Pritchard and that it was necessary for him to go there at once. He welcomed the opportunity. Promptly he wrote Tamea that he was called away, but that he would telegraph her every day while he was traveling. Telegraphing was so much easier than writing under a handicap. Surely Tamea would understand that he could not afford to call her endearing names by wire. She must realize that men of his class did not do that sort of thing.

He was gone two weeks. Graves met him at the ferry depot upon his return.

"I'm glad you've returned, sir," Graves announced. "The fur has been flying since you left. Mrs. Pippy gave Julia the air the minute you and Miss Larrieau were out of the house, so Julia beat it down to the convent and reported to Miss Larrieau. Up comes Miss Larrieau from the convent and tells Mrs. Pippy where to head in, and there's a grand row. Mrs. Pippy calls on Sooey Wan to give Julia the bum's rush out of the house and Sooey Wan tells her to go to Halifax or some other seaport. Then Mrs. Pippy cries and Julia cries and Sooey Wan cusses like a pirate and Miss Larrieau takes charge of the house and she and Sooey Wan are running it."

Dan gasped. "But where is Mrs. Pippy?"

"She must have got frightened and left, or else Miss Larrieau fired her. Anyhow, she's gone."

"Has Miss Larrieau returned to school?"

"No, sir. I think she's waiting until you get back."

Dan sighed in lieu of the words he could not muster. Here indeed, in the expressive terminology of Graves, was "hell to pay and no pitch hot."

He dropped in at the office for a few minutes to look through his accumulated mail. In it he found a formal resignation from Mrs. Pippy, who regretted that the lack of his moral support at a time when her position had grown untenable rendered her resignation imperative. She informed him of the address to which he might mail her check.

"I suppose I shall never have another Mrs. Pippy," Dan sighed, and added, "and I hope I never shall."

The moment he entered his home Tamea leaped out at him suddenly from behind the portières where she had been hiding. "*Chéri!*" she cried and favored him with a bone-cracking hug. "My adored one," she added, and delivered a barrage of osculation that left Dan quite breathless. When he could speak he said:

"Graves has told me of the battle which took place here during my absence. Tamea, I am not pleased with your high-handed procedure."

"*P-f-f.* Dear one, that Pippy was offensive. I disliked that old woman the first time she looked at me—like this," and Tamea wrinkled her adorable nose.

"There was nothing else to do. She had defied me by dismissing Julia, and this was mutiny, since Julia was mine and you had given her to me. If the king fails to protect those who come under the king's protection, the people murmur and there is discontent and perhaps revolt, is there not? My place was here to protect my servant and I came and protected her. I have done well and you must not reprove me, dear one. If you do I shall be very unhappy."

"Oh, it's all right, it's all right," Dan protested. "It's just that I hate a beastly row. You did not secure permission from the Mother Superior to come here?"

"I?" the amazed girl demanded. "I—Tamea, plead for permission? You do not know me, I think, dear one. Julia came in the car with Graves and I left at once. At the gate the nun on watch desired to stop me. She even laid hands upon me, but I thrust her aside. *Tiens*, I was angry!"

"I judged as much from a letter which the Mother Superior wrote me. Tamea, you may not return to that convent. They cannot control you and they do not desire that you remain there longer. My dear, can you not realize that this is very, very embarrassing to me?"

"It is very delightful to me, darling Dan. I did not wish to remain there. They opened your letters to me and before I could seal my letters to you they

were read. So I did not send them, but kept them all for you. Tonight, after dinner, you shall read them, one by one. Yes, at that convent there was much between us of what you call in this country rough house."

Sooey Wan came in from the kitchen, grunted a greeting to his employer, picked up Dan's bags and disappeared upstairs with them. Returning, he paused for a moment at the foot of the stairs and said:

"Missa Dan, you fire Julia, Sooey Wan ketchum boat, go back China pretty quick."

His impudence enraged Dan. "You may start now, Sooey Wan," he told the Celestial. "I'll keep Julia, but you're fired."

Sooey Wan looked at Tamea, who smiled and nodded to him. In effect she said to him: "Don't pay any attention to him, Sooey Wan. I am in command here."

Sooey Wan had evidently planned for this moment. His shrill, unmirthful cachinnation rang through the house. "Boss," he piped, "you klazy, allee same Missie Pip. You fire me? Pooh-pooh! No can do. Sooey Wan belong your papa, papa give me to you, how can do? You fire me, who ketchum dinner, eh? You klazy."

Again Dan sighed. It appeared that Sooey Wan's first introduction to the Pritchard household had been due to a tong war in Chinatown. Sooey Wan, young, bold, aggressive, had been marked for slaughter in a tong feud, and the high-binder whose duty it had

been, for a consideration, to waft him into the spirit world, had dropped Sooey Wan with his first shot. Then a cane had descended upon his wrist, causing him to drop his pistol. The peacemaker, Dan's father, had thereupon possessed himself of it, handed the would-be assassin over to the police and forgotten the incident. Sooey Wan eventually recovered from his wound and at once sought out Pritchard senior, to whom he explained that by reason of an ancient Chinese custom he who saved a human life was forever after responsible for that life. Therefore, it behooved Dan's father to place Sooey Wan on his payroll instanter, which, being done, the latter became one of the assets of the Pritchard estate. Inasmuch as Dan had been the sole heir to that estate, naturally, to Sooey Wan's way of thinking, he had inherited his father's responsibility for Sooey Wan's life while the latter continued to live. *Ergo*, Sooey Wan could not be dismissed!

Decidedly, reprisals were not in order. There was naught to do save accept the situation gratefully, cast about for another school for Tamea and try, try again. Dan recalled that there was a very excellent convent in Sacramento. He would call upon the Mother Superior there, explain Tamea at length and seek to have the censorship law repealed in so far as she was concerned. He would offer to pay double the customary rate in return for special treatment and forbearance in Tamea's case. And he would tell that

infernal Julia what he thought about her—no, he would not. If he did she would weep and when Julia wept her pathetic lack of beauty was extraordinarily depressing.

"Well, I'm awfully happy to see you again, sweetheart," he said, and favored Tamea with one hearty kiss in return for the dozens she had showered upon him. "Any news from Maisie or her aunt?"

"Divil a wor'rd, sor," said Julia, coming downstairs at that moment. "I called her up, makin' bould enough to ax her to reason wit' Mrs. Pippy, sor, but she would not. Says she to me, says she: 'Julia, there's no reasonin' wit' anybody in that household, so I'll not be botherin' me poor head about them. When Misther Pritchard wants me he'll sind for me."

"Quite so, Julia, quite so. She is absolutely right."

He went upstairs, bathed and changed his clothes. He intended returning to the office, but Tamea pleaded with him to spend the remainder of the day amusing her. So he took her to a vaudeville show, and Tamea held his hand and, between acts, whispered to him little messages of love. Once, when the house was dark, she leaned over and kissed him very tenderly on the ear. Then, remembering that he held a grudge against Sooey Wan, whom he knew would prepare a special dinner to celebrate his return, Dan decided to take Tamea out to dinner and, deliberately, to fail to telephone Sooey Wan. He knew that would infuriate

the old Chinaman and indicate to him that he had been reproved.

They went to an Italian restaurant, the Fiore d'Italia, up in the Latin quarter. It was a restaurant which was patronized nightly by the same guests; indeed, Dan, who had a weakness for some of the toothsome specialties of the house, had been a guest there about three times a month for years, and Mark Mellenger had been, with the exception of Thursday nights when he dined at Dan's house, a nightly habitué of the Fiore d'Italia for fifteen years. Dan had a desire to bask for an hour in the light of Mellenger's delightful but infrequent smile and had chosen to take Tamea to the Fiore d'Italia in the hope of seeing him there.

Mellenger was just rising from his table as they entered. He greeted them both cordially, but to Dan's pressing invitation to sit and talk awhile he replied that he was much too busy at the office and hurried away. Scarcely had he gone when Grandpère, an ancient waiter who looked for his evening tip from Mark Mellenger as regularly as evening descended upon San Francisco, came in with an order of striped bass *à la* Mellenger. Dan and Tamea had seated themselves at the table vacated by Mellenger, and Grandpère stood a moment, blinking at the vacant chair. Then he glanced toward the peg upon which Mellenger's wide soft hat always hung and,

finding it gone, sighed and returned to the kitchen with the order.

"Why, Mel left without eating!" Dan exclaimed.

"Yes, he saw us first, dear one. He desired to spare himself the embarrassment of having to speak too much with me," Tamea explained. "At Del Monte I told Mellengair some things he did not like."

"Oh, Tamea, how could you? He is my dearest friend."

She shrugged. "He told me things I did not like. We are even now. I think I should tell you that he will not come to your house again for dinner while I am there."

Again Dan sighed. Things were closing in around him. He had lost an excellent housekeeper, his maid and his cook were in open revolt, his best man friend avoided him and his best woman friend had quarreled with him—and all over Tamea. The amazing part of it all was that he simply could not quarrel with Tamea. He could only adore her and strive to believe that it wasn't adoration. Tamea, watching him narrowly, saw that he had surrendered to the situation and, as was his custom, he would forbear seeking the details of a situation repugnant to him. So she dipped a small radish in salt and handed it to him with the air of royalty conferring the accolade.

There was dancing to the music of an accordion played by an Italian. He was a genial man, with

smiles for all the dancers, and very generous with his encores. Old patrons nodded to one another across the tables, there was much pleasant conversation and some noisy eating, for the Fiore d'Italia was a restaurant dedicated to food rather than the niceties of eating, and was patronized by democratic folk who held good food to be superior to table manners. The camaraderie of the place appealed to Tamea at once, and when presently the accordion player, between dances, commenced to play very softly "O Sole Mio," and an Italian waiter who had almost attained grand opera paused with a stack of soiled dishes on his arm and sang it, Tamea was transported with delight.

"We will dance, no?" she pleaded brightly.

Dan would have preferred the bastinado, but—they danced. All eyes were on Tamea. Who was she? Where did she come from? That was Pritchard with her, was it not? Who was Pritchard? Zounds, that girl was a corker! How she could dance and how she loved it! A regular Bohemian, eh?

"You play very well, Monsieur," Tamea complimented the musician as the dance ceased. "Please, I would play your accordion. It is so much finer than my own."

Before Dan could protest the Italian had handed her his instrument, Tamea had seated herself and commenced to play "Blue Danube Waves." Dan stood, beseeching her with his eyes to cease making a spec-

tacle of herself and return to the table, but the spirit of carnival had entered into Tamea and she would not be denied. She knew what Dan wanted her to do but she would not do it.

"Every one dance," she commanded. "And I will play that this tired musician may dance also. It is not fair that he should play always."

There was a hearty round of applause and the dancers came out on the floor.

"Tamea, dear, you're making a spectacle of yourself," Dan pleaded.

"If you would do the same, dear one," she replied lightly, "you would be such a happy boy."

She was beating time with her foot; and when the dance was ended she played a ballad of Riva and sang it. The Fiore d'Italia was in an uproar of appreciation, athrill at a new sensation, as the girl handed the accordion back to its owner, thanked him and joined Dan at their table. Immediately all who knew Dan personally or who could rely on the democracy and camaraderie of the place to excuse their action, came over to be introduced to Tamea and felicitate her on her playing and singing. Marinetti, the proprietor, was delighted, and in defiance of the Eighteenth Amendment presented Tamea with a quart of California champagne, which Grandpère fell upon and carried away to be frappéd.

The girl's face glowed with a happiness that was

touching. "Here is life, dear one," she cried. "Why should I stifle in a convent when there is joy and singing and dancing in your world? We will come here very frequently, no? . . . Oh, but yes! You would not deny your Tamea the pleasure of this beautiful place? Would you, darling Dan Pritchard? Say no—very loud—like that—*No.*"

"No," he growled.

His reward was a loving twig at his nose while those around him laughed at his embarrassment. What a dull fellow he was to be so evidently appreciated by such a glorious creature, they thought. Some youths among the diners even wondered if it might not be possible to relieve him of the source of his embarrassment!

It was eleven o'clock when they left the Fiore d'Italia, and Tamea had sung, danced and played her way into the hearts of the patrons to such an extent that Dan felt he could never bear to patronize that restaurant again. Thus he retired with the added conviction that in addition to robbing him of his friends Tamea had now robbed him of his favorite restaurant. Like all bachelors he was a creature of habit and resented the slightest interference with those habits.

The following morning he journeyed to Sacramento to arrange for Tamea's entrance into the convent there. To his huge disgust small-pox had developed in the school and the convent was under quarantine. So he returned to San Francisco and, feeling a trifle

depressed at the manner in which fate was pursuing him, he telephoned to Maisie.

With characteristic feminine ease Maisie elected to forget that she had been fifty per cent responsible for their disagreement at Del Monte. She had thought the matter over, tearfully but at great length, and had come to the conclusion that even if she was not a martyr she could not afford to let Dan Pritchard think so. After a silence of about two weeks Dan had a habit of ringing up and burying the hatchet, and Maisie hadn't the slightest doubt but that this was his mission now. She resolved to be dignified and enjoy his suit for reëstablishment of the *entente cordiale.*

"Hello, Dan'l," she answered, and her clear, cool voice sounded like music in Dan's ears. "Are you in trouble?"

"I'm up to my eyebrows in it, Maisie!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Dan! But then it's no more than I expected. I thought you'd send for me when you needed me."

"I do not need you!" he replied furiously, and hung up.

CHAPTER XXIII

THROUGHOUT these late trying experiences Dan had been further distressed to discover that during the hours he was unavoidably separated from Tamea, he thought more about her than he did of his business. He had missed her bright presence far too keenly during her brief sojourn at the convent—so much so, in fact, that when one day he asked himself if it were really possible that he, sober, steady, dependable, sane Dan Pritchard, had fallen in love with this lovely half-caste girl, his common sense assured him that it was even so.

He told himself that this was silly, stupid, unintelligent, that he could not afford to yield to this tremendous temptation, that it would be a terrible mistake, bitterly to be repented. Nevertheless, he lacked the courage or the steadfastness of purpose to take the offensive immediately; he told himself he *would* take the offensive, but not immediately . . . and following his brief spat with Maisie over the telephone he found Tamea's society so comforting and stimulating that he shuddered at the thought of hurting her—himself—with the promulgation of a sophisticated argument she could not possibly understand and which she would

have rejected even had she possessed the gift of understanding a white man's reason for discarding her love, even while he yearned for it.

From time to time Sooey Wan, growing impatient at his adored employer's shilly-shallying, urged definite action. Again and again he reminded Dan that the sooner he married the lady queen the sooner would his adventure in fatherhood commence. Sooey Wan confided that he had consulted with the most eminent magicians in Dupont Street, with a priest who was a very wise man and an oracle; he had sought signs of approbation from his numerous Chinese gods and had propitiated them with much burning of punk in the Joss houses; he had burned devil papers in every room of the house and had strung fire crackers completely around the house and set them off, to the signal terror of the neighbors.

The magician had predicted for Dan five brawny sons—a hard hand to beat. The oracle had advised quick action since procrastination has ever been the thief of time and the girl was young and comely. Why, then, dally until she should become a hag? In his own mind Sooey Wan was fully convinced, from certain signs, that his Mongolian gods looked with favor upon the match, and since practically all of the fire crackers had exploded, the old heathen was certain that the devils of bad luck, which might or might not have interfered, had been thoroughly exorcised.

To all of this harangue Dan gave a stereotyped reply: "Sooey Wan, you are an interfering and impudent old Chinaman. Keep your nose out of my private affairs."

Whereupon Sooey Wan would fairly screech: "Missa Dan, wh' for you play damn fool? Boy, you klazy. Sure you klazy."

When Dan discovered that he would have to mark time until the convent in Sacramento should be released from quarantine, he pleaded the urgent necessity for an unavoidable absence from the city and sought to start his offensive campaign against Tamea's steadily mounting influence over him by going away for a two weeks' fishing and painting excursion in Southern California. Tamea was somewhat piqued because he did not invite her to accompany him, but he ignored her little pout, kissed her tenderly and fled. And he had no sooner settled himself comfortably in a hotel at Santa Catalina Island than Maisie Morrison rang up Julia.

"Julia," she said, "where is Mr. Pritchard?"

"The dear Lord only knows, Miss Morrison."

"I *must* know where a telegram can reach him, Julia. Mr. Pritchard did not tell his secretary where he was going, so it could not have been a business trip. Put Graves on the line, Julia."

Graves, summoned from the garage, informed Maisie that he had driven Mr. Pritchard to the Southern

Pacific depot. There he had heard his employer direct a porter to stow his baggage in a compartment. Included in this impedimenta had been a case of fishing rods and a sketching outfit. Graves had noted that his employer had not taken a creel with him, hence he opined that if any fishing was to be done it would be sea fishing—and the boss had always had a weakness for Santa Catalina.

When Dan Pritchard came in from fishing that first day he found a telegram in his box at the hotel. It was from Maisie and read:

> Something has jarred Uncle John dreadfully. He is at home ill, but mentally, not physically. Better assure yourself that everything is quite right at the office. Would return immediately if I were you, although when you do you need not bother to call on me unless you feel you really ought to.
>
> MAISIE.

Within the hour Dan Pritchard had chartered a seaplane and was flying north. About ten o'clock that night the plane swooped down in the moonlight and landed him at Harbor View; within half an hour he was ringing the door-bell of John Casson's home.

"Take me immediately to Mr. Casson's room," he ordered the butler who admitted him. "It will not be necessary to announce me."

The man eyed him sympathetically and silently led the way upstairs. John Casson was not in bed, how-

ever. He was seated on a divan in his wife's upstairs sitting room, staring dully into a small grate fire. From her seat across the room his wife watched him furtively.

"Good evening, Mrs. Casson. Good evening, Mr. Casson," Dan greeted them. "What's gone wrong, Mr. Casson?"

The old dandy looked up, frightened. Dan could have sworn he shuddered. "I'd rather not discuss the matter tonight, Pritchard," he parried. "I'm not well."

"I'm sorry for that, sir. What appears to be the matter with you? Where do you feel ill? Have you eaten something that didn't agree with you or——"

"He has," Mrs. Casson interrupted bitterly. "He's been on a diet of high-priced rice for the past several weeks and it has made him ill. John, do not evade Dan's query. He is equally interested with you in this matter. Tell him what happened the day he left town."

"Well, Pritchard, my boy," old Casson quavered, "the rice market has gone to glory. It's down to five cents and every rice dealer in this city is a bankrupt."

"Do you include Casson and Pritchard in the cataclysm?"

Casson nodded slowly and suddenly commenced to weep.

"But we sold our rice——"

"I know we did—on ninety days. Now the people we have sold it to are wiped out and cannot pay for it. The damned Cubans are responsible. They deliberately wrecked the market. Overnight they made up their minds they had rice enough. The cargadores went on strike and refused to handle any more rice. The port of Havana is glutted with rice. It's on every dock and on every barge. They jammed the docks with it and loaded all the barges and then quit. Now the rice is being rained on; the ships that brought it are lying under heavy demurrage because they cannot get discharged; the rice brokers and wholesalers have treacherously refused to accept delivery on bona fide orders because the Havana market broke immediately when some frightened owners of cargoes cut their prices in order to unload at any price. Panic, I tell you—worst rice panic imaginable. Rice was up to twenty-one cents and overnight it broke to five cents."

Dan sat down. This was exactly what he had feared might happen. The war was ended, but profiteers, still hungry for exorbitant gains, had put the screws on rice, the staple food of Cuba. They had cornered the crop there, such as it was, and the crop that year had been meager. Then they had filled Havana harbor with ships loaded with Oriental rice and had steadily jacked the price up to the point of saturation. And then the Cubans, maddened at this

eight thousand tons at Manila—the lot we sold to Katsuma and Company at the market, against sight draft with bill of lading attached, payable at the Philippine National Bank?"

"Our Manila agent cabled that the bank had refused to honor the documents. I called up Katsuma and tried to get him to do something about providing funds or a credit to meet that draft, but he wouldn't or couldn't——"

"Katsuma didn't want to. He was up to the usual Jap trick—running out from a losing game. They never stand for their beating. You made him a price, f.o.b. Havana, that included cost, insurance and freight, did you not?"

Old Casson nodded miserably.

"Well, Katsuma got a notion that shipping rice to Havana was apt to lead to great grief, so he just didn't meet the draft. That keeps the owners of the Malayan out of their freight money and the chances are they will not permit the vessel to sail until the freight is paid. Did they come back on us for the freight?"

"They did. I paid it, and the Malayan is at sea with a cargo of eight thousand tons of rice fully insured but not paid for. It is going to cost us eighteen cents a pound to deliver that rice in Havana, and when it gets there we cannot deliver it. If we do it will be worth what we can get for it—say three to five cents—and the demurrage on the Malayan will be two thou-

sand dollars a day. Of course we have a suit against Katsuma and Company for breach of contract, but in the meantime we have to pay for the rice and I've given a ninety-day draft on London for that——"

"When it comes due we will not be able to meet it," Dan said dully. "The Katsuma assets are already nicely sequestrated. You monumental jackass! Why didn't you sue and attach their bank account, everything they have, quietly and without notice, the instant you learned they had repudiated their contract?"

"That would be a great deal like locking the stable door after the horse had been stolen, wouldn't it, Pritchard?"

Dan nodded. This was the first bright thing he could remember Casson having said in years. Yes, the wily Orientals had seen the storm gathering and had fled to their cyclone cellar, caring not a whit what happened to others, to their own business honor, to their business, provided their capital remained intact. They could always organize again under a new name.

"Well, we've been sent to the cleaners, Mr. Casson. You have succeeded magnificently, despite all I could do to thwart you. You have made a hiatus of your own life and mine. You've smashed your wife and Maisie. You were drowning; I tried to save you and you pulled me under with you. Well, I don't know what you intend doing with your private fortune—if

you have any, which I doubt—but I have assets close to two million dollars and our creditors can have them. As your partner I am jointly and severally responsible. If you cannot pay, I must. I shall. When the squall hits us we will call a meeting of our creditors, tell them how it happened, have a receiver appointed, turn over everything we have to him and quit business with whatever dignity we can muster."

He turned to Mrs. Casson. "If you will excuse me, Mrs. Casson, I will go now. Good night."

He went out into the hall and his head hung low on his heaving breast, his shoulders sagged, his arms dangled loosely from his long, raw-boned frame. He shook his head a little and mumbled something—curses, doubtless. At the bottom of the stairs he ran into Maisie. Her face was very white and she had been weeping.

"Thanks for your telegram, Maisie. I came as fast as I could. It's too late. Cleaned—cleaned—smashed by that madman—crooked as a can of worms—lucky thing I didn't ask you to marry me that day—lucky for you you weren't interested in my proposition. I couldn't afford that luxury now, my dear. It's terrible to have made two million dollars doing work one loathes, then lose the two million filthy dollars and have to start in doing the loathsome job all over again.

"Well, I'm young—I suppose I can stand it. Good

night, Maisie, good night. Sorry for you and Mrs. Casson—mighty sorry."

He fended away the imploring, uplifted arms that sought to enfold him, for Maisie, like all women who trifle with a man's heart when he is prosperous and happy, desired to claim that heart now that it was bruised and broken.

"Don't—please—I can't stand it—don't want to be coddled," he muttered, and strode past her to the door. It opened and closed after him swiftly, and Maisie, standing on the steps, watched through her tears his tall, ungainly form stumbling down the street. She yearned with a great yearning to run after him, to take that white face to her heart, to whisper to him a torrent of love words, to cherish and comfort him. Yet she knew that Dan, like all men, when cruelly hurt, preferred to be alone, resenting sympathy and desiring silence.

"Poor dear," she murmured, "when you have recovered a little from the shock of this failure I shall go to you and nothing shall keep you from me."

CHAPTER XXIV

DAN walked home. He had to have physical action. It was close to midnight when he let himself into his house, but there was a dim light burning in the living room and Dan turned in here, cast his hat and coat on top of the piano and rang savagely for Sooey Wan, who, having just returned from his nightly pilgrimage to Chinatown, answered on the jump. At sight of Dan's pale, tortured face the old Chinaman turned and fled to the kitchen. He returned presently bearing a siphon bottle, some ice, a bottle of Scotch whisky and—two glasses. Silently he mixed two highballs, handed one to Dan, took the other himself, sat down and said in a voice of compelling gentleness:

"Missa Dan, you tellum ol' Sooey Wan. Wha's mallah, boy?"

Dan cooled his parched throat with the highball. Indeed, he had rung for the Chinaman for the very purpose of ordering one. Strange, he thought, how Sooey Wan could understand him without a blueprint and directions for using!

"Sooey Wan, I'm all through. I have gone broke."

"All the way?" Sooey Wan's voice cooed like a flute.

"All the way and back, Sooey Wan. I'm done. You'll have to leave me now and go back to China. I cannot afford to pay your wages any more."

"To hell with wages!" Sooey Wan, for the first time in his life, was genuinely angry, disgusted and humiliated. His eyes showed it, his wrinkled lower lip twisted and revealed his yellow fangs, his voice reeked with the very soul of profanity as he rasped out a few words in Chinese. Then: "Big fool, wha' for you talkum money to Sooey Wan?"

"You know very well I didn't mean to offend you, you old idol," Dan protested. "I spoke the truth. I am broke, utterly smashed."

"Shut up!" screeched Sooey Wan. "Wha' for you all time tellum lie?" He set down untasted the highball he had planned to drink in profound sympathy with his adored boss and left the room.

"Sooey Wan, come back here!" Dan ordered.

Sooey Wan's voice rose in a shriek like the bull fiddle of his native land. "Shut up! Shut up! You klazy fool, wha's mallah you? You no bloke. You bet. No can do."

Dan sighed and sipped his highball. At the same moment Tamea slid out from under a dark afghan on a divan in the far corner of the room. She had fallen asleep there and, unknown to Sooey Wan and Dan, had been listening to their conversation. Swiftly she crossed the room to him now; as he rose to greet her

she put her arms around his neck and drew his head down until his cheek caressed hers. Thus she held him a long time, in silence, save for the plainly discernible, regular beat of her heart. Then:

"Poor boy! You are hurt? But yes, I know it."

He nodded. "Smashed," he murmured. "All my money gone. Ruined."

Tamea's glance went past his ear and rested on Sooey Wan standing in the doorway, a large red lacquered box in his arms. She shook her head at him ever so slightly and like a yellow wraith he faded back into the hall.

"Ruined?" Tamea queried. "Has my lord, then, parted with his honor?"

"No, no, not that," he cried brokenly. "Nobody will think that of me. I will pay, but it will take all I have to do it, and when they have finished with me I shall have nothing left wherewith to make a new start. But never mind, Tamea. I'm not whipped Just dazed, not down for the count. I'll come back."

He could feel the little chuckle of mirth that rippled through the lithe body pressed so close against him. "So?" she declared with her golden little laugh, "it is only a matter of money. And yet my lord is shaken like a coco-palm in the monsoon. Silly, silly white man. He does not know that I have money and that all of it is his." She drew his head around and kissed him on the lips; he trembled with the knowledge of

her tremendous sweetness. "You will take my money and let me see you smile again, Dan Pritchard," she commanded.

"No, no, darling. I couldn't do that—ever. Please do not ask me to."

"But why, dear one?"

"Then indeed would I be parting with my honor."

"What madness! Is it because I am not your wife? Well, we will be married quickly and then——"

"No," he protested. "I tell you it is impossible. I'll never be able to repay the debt of your asking me to take your money, but—I shall never, never take one penny of it. I couldn't."

"But after we are married——"

"Never. I am your guardian. Your father gave you to me because he had faith in my manhood, he believed me to be a gentleman. You will not understand because your love blinds you, Tamea, but the white men of my world have a code and we must never break it."

"Oh," said Tamea softly, and her eyes filled with tears. "Of what use is money save to buy happiness? When a man takes a woman to wife does he not take all she has—all of her love, all of her wealth, all of her faith? Is she not to be the mother of his children? You are right, dear one. I could never understand your white man's code."

"Some day you will, honey. Kiss me good night

and run along to your room, child. I am unhappy tonight and when I am unhappy I have a desire to be alone. I wish to think."

She kissed him and went upstairs obediently; as she paused on the first landing and gazed down into the hall she saw Sooey Wan slide noiselessly into the living room, his red lacquered box still clasped under his arm. Tamea stood there, wondering—and then to her ears came distinctly the sound of money clinking merrily.

Tamea came back downstairs and peered around the jamb of the door into the living room. Sooey Wan was on his knees beside the red lacquered box, with both hands tossing out on the carpet hundreds of gold pieces, bales of yellow-backed bills and large, fat, heavy Manila envelopes.

"You count 'em, Missa Dan," he begged when the box was empty. And Dan Pritchard, wondering, knelt beside Sooey Wan and counted long and in silence, making many notations on a piece of paper. And Tamea, watching, presently was aware that Sooey Wan, who trusted not in banks, had, in his forty-odd years in the United States, accumulated in that red lacquered box a fortune of two hundred and nineteen thousand, four hundred and nine dollars and eighty cents in cash and bonds.

"Sooey Wan," said Dan Pritchard, "do you cook for me by day and rob people by night?"

Sooey Wan cackled merrily. "Oh, your papa always pay me big money—hund'ed, hund'ed fifty dolla month and Sooey Wan no spend velly much. But Sooey Wan play poker velly nice, velly lucky fan tan and pi gow, and bimeby I ketchum one cousin. Cousin no money hab got, but him know all about raisee vegetable. You know, Missa Dan, ketchum farm up on Saclamento Liver. So Sooey Wan makee partner with cousin and raisee early spud, ketchum more land. Velly easy. Boss, you likee Sooey Wan sellee lanch on Saclamento Liver, can do. Sure. Sellee that land plenty quick, ketchum thousand dollar for one acre, have got thlee hund'ed acre. You likee, Missa Dan, I sell for you. Sooey Wan no ketchum son, no ketchum wifee, no ketchum papa, no ketchum mama, no ketchum nobody but Missa Dan. Missa Dan allee same Sooey Wan's boy. Eh? My boy losee money, Sooey Wan no loosum. Long time ago Sooey Wan talkee your father. Your father say: 'Sooey, my partner, Missa Casson, no good. Heap damn fool.' All light, I watchum." He came close to Dan and rested his yellow old claw of a hand on the beloved shoulder. "Boy," he said, "Sooey Wan savum all for you. You takee, you look out for Sooey Wan, givee little money for play China lottery, givee room, givee job, that's all light. Sooey Wan likee this house. Likee live here, likee die here, then you send Sooey Wan back to China, keepee land on Saclamento Liver, keepee money, mally

lady queen and have many son. I think that plenty good for my boy. Sooey Wan velly old man," he continued pleadingly. "No can live all time. Sure you takee, boy. Then you play lone hand in office. Old man Casson no damn good." He shrugged optimistically. "Bimeby you ketchum all your money back."

Dan Pritchard thrust out his long arms and his fingers closed around Sooey Wan's neck. "No," he said, "I'm not broke. I never was broke, and I never will be broke while you and Tamea live. Thank God for you both! I couldn't take her money, Sooey Wan, but I will take yours—later, when I need it. I'll make you a partner in my reorganized business." His fingers tightened around the old servant's throat. "You old yellow devil!" he said and shook Sooey Wan vigorously. "We understand each other, I think. God bless you and bring you to some sort of Oriental heaven, you golden-hearted old heathen."

Sooey Wan took up his untasted highball. "Hullah for hell!" he cackled, tossed off the drink, gathered up his fortune and departed for his room, chuckling like a malevolent old gnome.

Dan Pritchard sat down, alone in the living room, and wept. He was a bit of a sentimentalist. About one o'clock in the morning he went up to bed.

At two o'clock Sooey Wan was awakened by a rapping at his door. He crawled out of bed, opened the door an inch and found Tamea outside.

"Wha's mallah?" he growled.

"Sooey Wan, please lend me five hundred dollars—now," Tamea pleaded. "Dan Pritchard will pay you back."

"Wha' for you want money now?" Sooey Wan demanded suspiciously.

"You are a servant," Tamea reminded him. "You should not ask questions. If you do not desire to oblige me I will make Dan Pritchard send you away from this house."

Sooey Wan wilted, dug around in his red lacquered box and handed Tamea five hundred dollars. Then he went back to bed to think it over. As for Tamea, ten minutes later she let herself out the front door very quietly. She carried her accordion and a small suitcase which she had appropriated from Julia.

A taxicab cruised down Pacific Avenue after having deposited a bibulous gentleman in the arms of a sleepy butler. With an eye single to business the driver pulled over to the curb and hailed Tamea.

"Ride, Miss?"

"Take me to the place where the ships may be found," she ordered and climbed in. At Clay Street wharf, just north of the ferry building, she got out and walked along the waterside, north. At that hour the Embarcadero was deserted, save for an occasional watchman at a dock head, and to their curious glances Tamea paid no heed. She stumbled blindly on, questing like

a homecoming lost dog, and presently she found that which she sought. It was the unmistakable odor of copra and it brought Tamea to a little hundred and thirty foot trading schooner that lay chafing her blistered sides against the bulkhead at the foot of Pacific Street. Uninvited, Tamea stepped aboard, sat down on the hatch coaming and waited for dawn. With the dawn came a gasoline tug and bumped alongside the schooner. Then men came on deck and to them Tamea spoke in a language they could understand. The master came, stood before her and gazed upon her curiously.

"Who are you, young lady?" he said presently, "and what do you want?"

"I am the daughter of Gaston Larrieau, master of the schooner Moorea. My father is dead. My name is Tamea and I am weary of this white man's land. My heart aches for my own people and I would go back to them. I have money to pay for my passage. I would go to Riva."

"I have no passenger license, child, but your father was my friend. If you can stand us, we can stand you. There will be no charge for the passage. We are towing out this morning with the tide and our first port of call is Tahiti. Go below, girl, and the cook will give you breakfast."

As the sun was rising back of Mount Diablo the launch cast the little schooner adrift off the Golden

Gate and the Kanaka sailors, chanting a hymn, ran up her headsails. As they filled, Tamea came out of the cabin and looked again upon that ocher-tinted coastline, watched again the bizarre painted gasoline trawlers of the Mediterranean fishermen put out for the Cordelia banks. Then the mainsail went up and the schooner heeled gently over, took a bone in her teeth and headed south.

"It is best to leave him thus," the girl murmured. "He does not love me and he never will. I would not stay to afflict him. What he would not accept from me he accepted from a servant. Then I knew!"

She lifted her golden voice and sang "*Aloha,*" the Hawaiian song of farewell. . . .

For Tamea, Queen of Riva, was of royal blood, and when the gods rained blows upon her she could take them smiling!

CHAPTER XXV

AT seven o'clock the following morning Dan Pritchard was awakened from a light and fitful slumber by forceful hammering at his bedroom door. To his query, "Yes, yes, who is it?" a voice freighted with tears and fright answered:

"'Tis Julia, sor. Miss Tammy's gone, God help us."

"Gone? Gone? Gone where?"

"Sorra wan o' me knows, but she's not in the house and her bed has not been shlept in. I found a letther for you, sor, on her bureau." And Julia opened his door an inch and slid an envelope in to him. He read:

Beloved:

I was very foolish to think you truly loved me, to think that I, a half-caste Polynesian girl, could make you love me as I desire to be loved. Therefore, I leave you, though I love you. Because I love you, last night I offered you all that I have. You needed it, but— you could not accept it from me because that would have made you feel that you must accept me also. I have been shamed. I am not a woman of common blood, yet you re-

fused from me what you gladly accepted from your Chinese servant. So I have learned my lesson. I am not angry, dear one, but I am beginning to understand Mellenger was right. Your world is not for me. Please tell Mellenger that I forgive him and that I am sorry I spoke certain words to him, for he is both wise and brave and a loyal friend. Tell him I know he will forgive me, and why.

I have begged of Sooey Wan five hundred dollars. Please repay him. As for the money my father gave me, I leave it to you, for I love you. You need it and I would have you happy, even though I may not know happiness myself. Where I go I shall never require money.

Good-by, Dan Pritchard. Good-by to our love. Perhaps some day we shall meet in Paliuli, for the missionaries say that there even a half-caste girl shall be washed whiter than snow. But alas, I have never seen snow. I know not what it is.

And now I depart from this house, with naught in my heart for you but love.

Your

TAMEA.

Dan's heart was constricted. For several minutes he sat dumbly on the side of the bed, reading and rereading the letter, striving to realize that for the second time within twelve hours his world had come tumbling

about his ears. Julia's sniffling came to him through the slightly opened door. The sound irritated him.

"Send Sooey Wan up to me, Julia, please," he ordered.

"He's here now, sor."

"Come in, you yellow idiot," Dan roared, and the old Chinaman shuffled into the room and stood before him dejectedly, but with eyes that met his master's glance unflinchingly. "When Miss Larrieau asked you to lend her five hundred dollars, why did you not come up and tell me immediately?" he demanded.

"Sometime, Missa Dan," Sooey Wan answered humbly, "evlybody klazy. Las' night I think Sooey Wan klazy, too. After Missa Dan go bed, lady queen knock my door. She say: 'Sooey Wan, I likee fi' hund'ed dolla'.' I think velly funny, so I say 'Wha' for?' and lady queen get velly mad, so Sooey Wan think maybe lady queen wanchee buy plesent Missa Dan, maybe likee make suplise party. Wha' for Sooey Wan ketchum light for ask question to lady queen? Sooey Wan allee same cook, lady queen allee same lady boss. No can do, Missa Dan."

"That confounded single-track Oriental mind of yours has broken my heart," Dan groaned. "Sooey Wan, last night the lady queen offered to give me a quarter of a million dollars, but I would not accept it. It was a trust and I couldn't take advantage of her generous nature. I dared not risk losing her money.

Her father trusted me, and I couldn't accept money from a woman anyhow. She knows that you offered me money, however, and that I accepted if from you, only she doesn't know why. She doesn't understand that you're a man, Sooey Wan, that you can take a gambler's chance, that I'll throw old Casson out of the business and put you in as a silent partner; she doesn't understand that as a baby I acquired the habit of accepting money from you. You remember how you would give me spending money when my father wouldn't? You old fool, you've spoiled me, but you love me like a son and—well, Sooey Wan, you're not a Chinaman to me—a servant. You're my friend—the whitest white man and the truest friend I've ever known, God bless you—but oh, I could kill you this morning! You're such a lovable, loyal old booby, and because of you the girl has gone. She thinks now that I do not want her."

"Women," said Sooey Wan, "all klazy."

"I haven't the slightest idea where the girl could have gone."

"I think maybe go back same place lady queen come from," the crafty Chinaman suggested. "Maybe ketchum steamer today. I think velly good job talkee policeman, policeman ketchum velly quick. If lady queen no come back Sooey Wan shootum blains"—and he struck fiercely his bony, yellow temple.

"I have an idea, Sooey Wan. Last Sunday morning we walked along the waterfront together. I had a

schooner in from the south and I wanted to talk to the captain. At Pacific Street bulkhead there was a trading schooner, the Pelorus, unloading copra, and Tamea spoke to the Kanaka mate in his own language."

He reached for the telephone and called up the Meiggs wharf lookout of the Merchants' Exchange.

"Has the schooner Pelorus sailed?" he queried, after introducing himself as a member of the Exchange.

"Towed out with the tide about five o'clock this morning, Mr. Pritchard."

"What towed her out?"

"A Crowley gasoline tug, sir. Wait a minute until I get the glass on her. She's just coming back after dropping the Pelorus off the Gate." A silence. Then, "Crowley Number Thirty-four."

"Thank you." Dan hung up and turned to Sooey Wan. "Bring me a cup of coffee and a piece of toast. Get Graves out and tell him to have the car waiting in front in fifteen minutes," he ordered, and leaped for his shower bath. By the time he was dressed Sooey Wan appeared with the coffee and just as Crowley tug Number Thirty-four slid into her berth to await another towing job, Dan Pritchard appeared on the dock and hailed her skipper in the pilot house.

"You towed the Pelorus out a couple of hours ago. Did you happen to observe whether she carried any passengers?"

"I did. One, sir. A young lady."

"Describe her."

"A handsome young lady, sir, dark complected in a way, and yet not dark. Struck me she might have just a drop of Island blood in her, sir. She was wearin' a blue suit but no hat, and when I saw her first as I bumped alongside she was settin' on the main hatch coamin' and she'd been cryin'."

"Any baggage?"

"A suitcase and an accordion. The skipper of the Pelorus found her settin' there and she introduced herself. I gathered that he knew her people and was glad to meet her. She must have shipped as a passenger, because she was standin' aft lookin' back at the city the last I saw of the Pelorus."

"How fast is the fastest tug or launch in the Crowley fleet?" Dan next inquired.

"Fifteen miles an hour."

"Great! I'll charter her. I want to overhaul the Pelorus and take that girl off."

The man in the pilot house shook his head. "No use, sir. The Pelorus has lines like a yacht and she's a witch in a breeze of wind. There's a thirty mile nor'west breeze on her quarter and she's logging fifteen knots if she's logging an inch this minute. I cast her off at six fifteen—two hours ago. She'd be hull down on the horizon in an hour. You couldn't hope to overhaul her, sir."

"Thank you, friend. I dare say you're right." He

wadded a bill into a ball and tossed it in the pilot house window, smiled wanly and returned to his car. On the way up to the office of Casson and Pritchard he formulated a plan of action, which he proceeded to place in operation the moment he found himself alone in his private office.

First he looked up the Pelorus in Lloyd's Register and satisfied himself that she was staunch and seaworthy, or rather that she had been a year previous. She was owned in Honolulu. Well, Tamea would doubtless be safe aboard her—that is, safe from the elements, although a cold feeling swept over him as he thought of that glorious creature alone on a trading schooner, at the mercy of her captain. He hoped the man was different from the majority of his kind.

At nine o'clock he telephoned the Customs House and learned that the Pelorus had cleared for general cruising in the South Pacific, with her first port of call Tahiti. With a sinking heart Dan recalled that there was neither wireless station nor cable station at Tahiti, and a close scrutiny of the Shipping Guide disclosed the fact that the next steamer for Sidney, via Tahiti, Pago Pago and Raratonga would not sail for two weeks. Well, he would write Casson and Pritchard's agent at Tahiti to board the Pelorus when she dropped hook in the harbor and deliver to the girl a letter and a draft on the French bank in Tahiti, to enable her to purchase a first class steamer passage back to San

Francisco, where they would be married immediately. Undoubtedly the steamer would beat the Pelorus to Tahiti, even though the latter vessel should have a two weeks' start. Even should the Pelorus beat her in, the schooner would probably lie in Tahiti harbor for a week and Tamea would go ashore and visit friends of her father's while awaiting passage on a schooner that could drop her off at Riva. The chances for overhauling the heart-broken fugitive were excellent; the letter which would reach her, via the steamer and later by hand of Casson and Pritchard's agent, would bring her back to him. Of that he felt assured.

However, in the event the steamer should never reach Tahiti, he essayed two other means of communicating with her, via his agent. There was a wireless station at Fanning Island and another at Noumea, so he sent a message to each, with a request that it be relayed to Tamea by the first vessels touching there and bound for Tahiti.

He had done all he could to retrieve the situation now, so he spread his long arms out on his desk, laid his face in them and suffered. He yearned for the blessed relief of tears, for at last Dan Pritchard was realizing that he did indeed love Tamea with all of the wild and passionate love of which he had dreamed. He had not believed that it would be possible for him to love any woman so. His heart ached for her. He was thoroughly wretched.

What matter if her mother had been a Polynesian princess, her father a carefree, wandering love-pirate, a very Centaur? Tamea was—Tamea—and in all this world there would never, by God's grace, exist another like her.

He got out her letter and read it again, and a lump gathered in his throat as he realized how sweet it was, how benignant, how overflowing with love and the gladness of love's sacrifice. How prideful she was and how childish! What a tremendous indication was her act, of a tremendously regal character! Poor, bruised, misunderstanding and misunderstood heart. His tears came at last. . . .

By noon he had regained control of himself, and resolutely driving from his mind all thoughts of Tamea, he concentrated upon his business affairs. His first move was to order the firm's books closed as of that date and a schedule of assets and liabilities drawn up, after which he wrote a form letter to the firm's customers explaining the predicament in which Casson and Pritchard found themselves and the reason for it, pledged his own private fortune to retrieve the situation in part and invited the creditors to meet with him and his attorneys in the assembly room of the Merchants' Exchange a week hence, when a thorough and comprehensive review of the situation would be possible and at which time he hoped to have worked out a scheme for the rehabilitation of the business and the payment

of one hundred cents on every dollar of the firm's obligations.

As yet no one, not even the chief clerk, knew that Casson and Pritchard were listed among the casualties in the post-war collapse of values which Dan had feared so long. Dan and his partner were the sole custodians of that cheerless information, but in their minds existed no illusions regarding their situation. That eight thousand tons of rice aboard the Malayan alone spelled a loss of at least a million and a half. Already the market on coffee, sugar, Oriental oils, copra and a hundred other commodities had commenced to slump, and, in the wild scramble to throw trades overboard before too heavy a loss should accrue, Dan knew that every importing and exporting house in the country would be hard put to weather the storm. Casson and Pritchard would have to face other losses in the natural order of business, and Dan was shrewd enough to realize that these, coupled with the tremendous loss on old Casson's rice gamble, would force him to cry for quarter. Therefore he faced the issue resolutely and calmly made his preparations for the assault of the firm's creditors by assuming the initiative.

For a week he worked all day and part of each night at the office. Old Casson, cruelly stung with remorse and fright, remained at home and did not communicate with him, a condition for which Dan was grateful. He heard nothing from Maisie, nor did his thoughts dwell

long or frequently upon her. He had room in his harassed mind for thoughts of but one woman—Tamea.

All during that terrible week gossip linked irremediable disaster with some of the oldest and soundest firms on the Street. Apparently Katsuma and Company had been smashed beyond all hope of rehabilitation, for Katsuma, Jap-like, had solved his problem by hanging himself and was as dead as Julius Cæsar. There was a panic in Wall Street and already local banks had grown timid and were refusing the loans so necessary to the successful operation of the commerce upon which banks must, perforce, predicate their existence. Demand loans were being called, and when not met the collateral back of them was levied upon.

At the conclusion of that week's business Dan had before him a written record of Casson and Pritchard's affairs; the letters to creditors lay on his desk, awaiting his signature, and his plan of rehabilitation, even his address to the firm's creditors, had been rehearsed until he knew it by heart. At eleven o'clock on Saturday his bank called a large loan. Over the telephone the banker informed Dan crisply but courteously that they expected the note to be paid on Monday; whereupon Dan Pritchard sent out his letters to Casson and Pritchard's creditors and then sent for Mark Mellenger, whom he had not seen since the latter's sudden retreat from the Italian restaurant in the Latin quarter.

"I've sent for you, Mel," Dan informed his friend,

"to give you two exclusive stories, one of which is for publication. In the first place, Tamea has returned to Riva, or at least she is now en route there. I am endeavoring, however, to turn her back at Tahiti in order that I may marry her."

"Why did she leave? Did you send her away?"

Dan briefly explained and Mellenger listened in silence; at the conclusion of Dan's recital he merely nodded and said: "I suppose any man would be a very great fool not to marry a woman like Tamea. She is the only one of her kind I ever heard of. What's the other story?"

"It's contained in this letter to the creditors of our firm. I'm busted, Mel. However, I shall rise, like the phenix, from my ashes, thanks to Sooey Wan. I'll reorganize the firm, eliminating Casson, who is in no position to dictate terms or claim an interest for alleged good-will. I hope he has means to enable him to take care of Mrs. Casson and Maisie, and if he hasn't I dare say Maisie can do something to support herself."

"I'll write you a nice, kindly story regarding the embarrassment of your firm. I've been writing such stories for two weeks. I dislike to air your difficulty, Dan, but if I do not the other papers will, so I might as well scoop them in the Sunday edition. Poor Tamea! I shall probably not see her again, but I am glad to have her friendship at least. Her friendship is worth something."

He accepted one of Dan's cigars and commenced to talk of other things; at parting he remarked, casually, that he would be up to the house for dinner the following Thursday night—now that Tamea was no longer there to be oppressed by his presence.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE wisdom of Dan's course in announcing the insolvency of Casson and Pritchard before the announcement should be forced from him by the firm's creditors was fully manifested at the meeting of the creditors. Each creditor had received a copy of the firm's trial balance and the schedule of assets and liabilities; also a copy of Dan's proposed plan of settlement and reorganization. The settlement contemplated a payment of twenty-five per cent on all liabilities at once, with a three-year extension on the balance due, at five per cent, and a payment of the interest and twenty-five per cent of the principal annually. All of the creditors had had three days in which to read this plan, study it and discuss it with their principals, and the result was that Dan's plan was enthusiastically and gratefully accepted, with the proviso that John Casson retire from the partnership. The method of his retirement the creditors left to Pritchard.

The task of severing Casson from the firm was not a difficult one. His share of the debts practically equaled his equity in the assets and he accepted eagerly Dan's offer to take over his assets and liabilities in

return for a release from the creditors for Casson's share of the firm's indebtedness to them. He had about a quarter of a million dollars in cash and real estate in his private fortune and this Dan forced him to turn over to his wife, as the only guarantee that he could think of against a disastrous reëntry into business and, consequently, a penniless and sorrowful old age for all concerned.

At the last moment a hitch occurred. Two banks, carrying nearly half a million dollars' worth of Casson and Pritchard paper, bearing Dan Pritchard's endorsement, suddenly decided, after the fashion of banks, to play safe. "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" is ever the fashion of the banker who finds himself the possessor of a slight advantage over other creditors. Overnight they entered suit against Dan, as endorser and guarantor of Casson and Pritchard's notes, and levied attachments against every asset of his they could locate. In the face of this unexpected treachery Dan had but one alternative, and he chose it unhesitatingly. He filed a voluntary petition in bankruptcy, for himself and for the firm, thus vitiating the banks' attachments and placing all of his and Casson and Pritchard's creditors upon an equal footing. Thereupon the bank withdrew its suit against Dan and petitioned the court for a receiver for Casson and Pritchard— a petition in which the other creditors were now forced to join. A receiver was immediately ap-

pointed and took charge of the business of Casson and Pritchard.

It was then that Dan Pritchard's spirit broke. The day the receiver took charge he cleaned out his desk and departed from that office. The following day he had leased his home furnished, dismissed Graves and Julia, stored his cars and purchased a passage to Tahiti. With Tamea's money he promptly purchased Liberty Bonds, which in the panic had dropped twenty points, and established a trust fund for her with a local trust company. Then, accompanied by Sooey Wan, he went aboard the Union Line steamer Aorangi and departed for Tahiti, hoping to find Tamea, marry her there and then consider what he should do with his life thereafter. He was crushed at the unexpected turn his business affairs had taken. He had turned over to the receiver every dollar, every asset he possessed, and he no longer had the slightest interest in the affairs of Casson and Pritchard.

The creditors might do what they pleased with the business. They could either operate it under a receivership until it paid out, or they could liquidate it. It was their business now and Dan had done all that any honorable man could do to meet his obligations. Old Casson had his release from all of the creditors, including the banks, for these latter had fairly accurate information as to the latter's finances, and, with Pritchard's endorsement to protect

them, they had concluded to dispense with picking old Casson's financial bones.

The knowledge that Maisie would not be thrown under the feet of the world comforted Dan greatly. He was too depressed to call upon her and say good-by before sailing, so he wrote her a brief note of farewell instead; desirous of losing touch with his world, he did not tell her where he was bound. To Mellenger only did he confide, and that silent and thoughtful man had merely nodded and declined comment.

At last, Dan reflected as, stretched out in a steamer chair in the snug lee of the Aorangi's funnel, he watched the coast of California fade into the haze, he was free. Business no longer claimed him. If the receiver desired any information touching the firm's affairs he had complete and comprehensive records before him, and if he could not understand those records, there was the efficient office force to aid him. Yes, he was free. He would wander now, with Sooey Wan to take care of him financially and physically.

And he felt no qualms in the realization that he was now dependent entirely upon Sooey Wan. In a way he had always been dependent upon Sooey Wan, but on the other hand, was not Sooey Wan dependent upon his Missa Dan?

As the old Chinaman had often assured him, the only human being in the world to whom he was bound by the tightest tethers of affection was Dan Pritch-

ard. Wherefore, why should he decline a loan from Sooey Wan? To have done so would have been to inflict upon the loyal old heathen a cruel hurt. And money meant little to Sooey Wan; it was good to gamble with, that was all. In the end Sooey Wan, dying, would have willed his entire estate to his beloved Missa Dan; why, therefore, be a sentimental idiot and decline to accept it while Sooey Wan lived? Why deny the old man this great happiness?

Sooey Wan, neatly and unostentatiously arrayed in Oriental costume and occupying a first class cabin all to himself, lolled in a chair alongside Dan and puffed contentedly at a long briarwood pipe. He was having the first vacation he had ever known and he was enjoying it, for presently he turned to Dan and said:

"Missa Dan, I think evlybody pretty damn happy. No ketchum work, ketchum plenty money, ketchum nice lest, ketchum lady queen, velly nice. Eh, Missa Dan?"

"Sooey Wan," Dan replied, "so far as I am concerned, I never want to operate another ship or buy another pound of copra or draw another check. I'm going to marry the lady queen the very day we find her; after that I'm going to paint pictures and dream and soak myself from soul to liver with just plain, unruffled, untroubled, simple living. Sooey Wan, I'm content just to sit here and look at the ocean. The other fellows can have all the worry now. They wanted it and I gave it to them and I hope they enjoy it. I'm

content to know they will get their money out of Casson and Pritchard, although it ruins me."

"You allee time talkee like klazy man, boss. Wha' for you luined? Plenty money hab got. Shut up! You makee me sick."

Fell a long, blissful silence, while Dan stared at the sea and permitted his brain to sink into a state of absolute quiescence, and Sooey Wan speculated on the expectancy of life in superannuated Chinamen in general and of himself in particular. For the paternal instinct was strong in Sooey Wan and the years had been long since Dan's baby arms had been around his neck and Dan's soft cheek had been pressed in love against Sooey Wan's. Sweet memories of a sweet experience! Childless old Sooey Wan yearned for it again, yearned to have his Missa Dan know the thrill that had been denied to Sooey Wan—the thrill of fatherhood.

Arrived at Tahiti, Dan's eager glance swept the little harbor as the Aorangi crept in. The Pelorus lay at anchor. The skipper of the tug that had towed her out of San Francisco bay was right. She was a witch in a breeze! The French customs officials who boarded the steamer informed Dan that she had arrived the day before. Zounds, what a smashing passage! And Tamea was over yonder in the town—just exactly where, he would ascertain from the master of the Pelorus.

Dan and Sooey Wan were into a short boat and pulling toward the Pelorus five minutes after the Aorangi had been given pratique. The master of the Pelorus met them at the rail as Dan came up over the Jacob's ladder.

"You had a passenger, Captain," said Dan. "A Mademoiselle Tamea Larrieau."

The master of the Pelorus eyed him gravely and nodded. "You are Mr. Pritchard, I take it, sir," he said.

"I am, Captain. Where is Tamea?"

"I wanted her to wait, Mr. Pritchard. I told her you'd be following on the first steamer, but she wouldn't listen to me. And I one of her father's oldest and closest friends, Mr. Pritchard. But she was what you might call broken-hearted. Nothing would do but she must get back to Riva and lose herself. The day we got in she booked a passage on the auxiliary schooner Doris Crane that was just leaving. The Crane has a passenger license and very excellent passenger accommodations, and Tamea will get as far as Tamakuku on her. Riva lies about eighty miles due west and the girl will charter a gasoline launch for the remainder of the journey."

"I doubt if she has sufficient money, Captain."

"She has. I charged her nothing for her passage. By the way," he continued with a sly smile, "the Doris Crane can be reached by wireless—maybe. Why not have the operator on the Aorangi try to get your message to Tamea?"

"Tamea told you about me, Captain?" asked Dan.

The skipper nodded, smiling. "When you know her better, sir, you'll make allowances for her native blood and her primitive way of reasoning."

"Thank you," Dan replied, and departed overside, to be pulled back to the Aorangi, where he filed a message to Tamea informing her that he would meet her in Riva, asking her to await him there, telling her that he loved her and begging her to wireless him in reply.

Just before the Aorangi pulled out that night the wireless operator telephoned him at his hotel to report that he had been unable to get in touch with the Doris Crane. Dan was cruelly disappointed and Sooey Wan, observing this, trotted out to the hotel bar and returned with two Gibson cocktails which he had prevailed upon the barkeeper to mix according to a time-honored formula. One of these cocktails Sooey Wan drank, in silent sympathy and understanding, while Dan partook of the other.

When the old cook noted a lifting of the cloud on Dan's face, he spoke, for Sooey Wan was one of those rare men who never speak out of their turn.

"Captain of schooner velly nice man. Wha' for you no rentum schooner? Plenty money hab got."

Dan's long arm rested affectionately across Sooey Wan's shoulders. "You dad-fetched old heathen, what would I do without you? You're the shadow of a rock in a weary land. Let's go."

Together they went—out to the Pelorus. Her master, seated on deck under an awning with a glass of grog before him, smiled as they came over the rail.

"I've been expecting you, Mr. Pritchard. I was ready to sail at four this afternoon, but something told me I'd best wait. It's about five hundred miles out of my way, but if you will insist on going to Riva I might as well have the job as anybody. Mighty few vessels cruise down that way. You might be hung up here for six months. Passage for two will cost you two thousand dollars."

"Hab got," said Sooey Wan promptly, and shed his duck coat. Up out of his linen trousers came his shirt tail and around his middle showed a wide money belt. This he unbuckled and gravely counted out two thousand dollars into the master's palm.

"Now I go ketchum baggage," he announced and went ashore. Half an hour later the Pelorus, in tow of a launch, was slipping out of the harbor. Once in the open sea, she heeled gently to the trade wind and rolled away into the southwest in the wake of the Doris Crane.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE Pelorus proved to be a comfortable and seaworthy vessel and her master (his name was Hackett) a most comfortable and seaworthy person. Although plainly hungry for a more intellectual brand of masculine society than ordinarily was to be found in the out-of-the-way places he visited, he tactfully forbore to obtrude upon Dan's mood of depression until quite certain that he was not obtruding—whereupon he would become a most delightful and entertaining companion. His besetting sin was Scotch and soda, albeit he resolutely declined, when at sea, to touch a drop before five o'clock in the afternoon and while he helped himself liberally until the steward announced dinner, the liquor never appeared to affect him. It developed that he and Gaston of the Beard had been warm friends. Hackett's admiration for the old Breton skipper had been very profound.

One day he said suddenly to Dan: "You have an unasked question in the back of your head, Mr. Pritchard. You need not bother to ask it. I shall answer it, however. Old Gaston Larrieau was my friend. We stood back to back, once, and shot our

way out of rather a dirty mess in the New Hebrides; I was wounded and unconscious at the finish and he swam with me half a mile through shark-infested waters to his ship. I am what I am and rather less than that in port, but I behave myself at sea and I have a long memory. Tamea was as nice a girl when she left the Pelorus as she was when she came aboard. I wasn't fixed to accommodate a woman passenger, but to such as I had she was welcome and no questions asked."

Dan smiled. "Thank you," he replied. "I *was* wondering."

"You're devilish frank," Hackett laughed. "I think I like you the better for your insulting thought. However, I wouldn't have been above it with anybody save old Gaston's girl. One grows to hold them rather cheaply, you know. Half-caste or full blood, they come and they go. Hearts are not too readily broken down this way, Mr. Pritchard."

"Tamea," said Dan Pritchard, "is a white woman."

"Nonsense, my dear sir. She's a half-caste."

"Her soul is white," said Dan doggedly.

"I am not prepared to dispute that assertion," Hackett replied casually. "I never quarrel with any man's likes or dislikes." He eyed Dan narrowly. "Something tells me you're going to marry this girl, Mr. Pritchard."

"Certainly."

"And take her back to the United States with you?"

Dan nodded.

Hackett shrugged, as who should say: "Well, it's none of my business what you do."

"You deprecate my decision," Dan charged irritably.

"I do not. I don't give a hoot what you do. I was thinking of the girl. If I stood in your shoes I wouldn't marry her. Why should you? You don't have to, and she doesn't expect you to. You'll regret it if you take her back to the United States, because she'll never be truly happy there. When you transplant these people they die of homesickness. They're so far behind our civilization they can never catch up, and the effort to do so wearies them and they die. They have the home instinct and the home yearning of a lost fox hound. They are children, I tell you. They never grow up—and you are not the man to wed with a woman who will never grow up."

"Nonsense," Dan growled. "Sheer, unadulterated nonsense."

Hackett shrugged and poured himself another peg of Scotch. "I've had three of them in my day. I think I ought to know. One was a Pitcairn islander and more than half white. I sailed a thousand miles off my course to bring her back to Pitcairn. She was slowly dying. She loved me but she loved Pitcairn and her people more."

There the conversation ceased, yet the effect of it

remained. Day after day, night after night, as the Pelorus rolled lazily before the trades, Dan Pritchard's mind dwelled on his problem. What if Hackett should be proved right, after all? Dan recalled how swiftly, how inevitably, Tamea's hurt heart had called her back to Riva and her own people. How poignantly had that bruised heart yearned for the understanding of those who could understand her?

His mind harked back to the nights when Tamea lay upon the hearthrug in his Pacific Avenue home and played sad little songs of Riva on her accordion. Could it have been that on such occasions her soul had been steeped in a vague, unsuspected nostalgia? If Hackett was right, then he, Dan Pritchard, journeyed upon worse than a fool's errand. Might he not be doing the kindly, the decent thing, to turn back, to trust to time and some other man to mend that broken heart? He wondered.

He could not, however, cherish seriously even for a moment the thought of abandoning his journey. Old Gaston had given Tamea to him to care for; the Triton had trusted him and he must go on. There was that cursed money he held in trust for her. She had abandoned it to him, out of the greatness of her love, but he could no more accept it now than he could the night she had offered it. He had to see her and return it to her. He had to win her complete forgiveness and understanding, to render her happy again.

Suddenly, one evening while he paced slowly backward and forward in the waist of the ship, he found the solution. He would marry Tamea and end his days in the Islands. He wanted a change. He told himself he was sick of civilization; he wanted to be simple and natural, free of the competition of existence.

Down there nobody would wonder why he had married Tamea. Conventions did not exist, nor foolish tradition nor social codes—and he could paint landscapes to his heart's content. He would establish a South Sea school of landscape painting. He would be through with the riddle of existence . . . and there was the embarrassment of Maisie and her aunt and old Casson and Mellenger and all of his friends should he return to San Francisco!

His decision, arrived at so suddenly, was peculiarly inexorable. He had thought too long and too hard; mentally he had come to the jumping-off place. On the instant his motto was: "The devil take everything —including me!" The rewards to be gleaned from the struggle that faced him, should he return to his white civilization, were scarcely commensurate with the effort required. A sudden, passionate yearning had seized him to chuck it all, to drift with the tide, to sample life in its elemental phases, to be happy in a land where all of the rules of existence were reversed . . . a man lived but once and he was a long time dead . . . and Dan wanted Tamea. . . . Ah, how

ardently he desired her and how lonely and desolate would be his life without her! Civilization demands much of repression, since civilized man, like the domestic dog, still retains many of the instincts of his primitive ancestors; and Dan was weary of repression. Hang it, he would go on the loose! He would take the gifts that the gods provided and cease to worry over the opinions of people whose sole claims to his consideration lay in the fact that they were white and dwelled in his world and were hobbled and frightened by tradition.

In all his life Dan had never arrived at a decision that he grasped more tenaciously or which yielded him a greater measure of comfort. A subconscious appeal permeated this new thought of freedom as a phrase runs through an opera. Free! He was going to be free! He was a volatile spirit and he had been corked too long; the collapse of his business offered him a splendid excuse for pulling the cork, and by all the gods, Christian and pagan, he would pull it. That was the idea! Chuck it, chuck it all and walk out of the picture without even a word of farewell to his world.

"I'll do it! By judas priest, I'll do it," he said audibly.

"I thought you would," said Captain Hackett's calm voice. Dan turned and caught the glow of the master's cigar as the latter stood on the companion

with his head and shoulders out of the cabin scuttle. "You've been thinking it over long enough. Your brains must be addled."

"Well, it is comforting to have come to a conclusion, at any rate," Dan defended.

"My guess is that you have concluded to settle in Riva and let the rest of the world go by, Mr. Pritchard."

"That remark forces me to wonder again why you continue to skipper a trading schooner, Captain. You should hang out your shingle as a clairvoyant or mind reader or fortune teller."

"I've seen your kind come and I've seen your kind go," Hackett retorted. "Once I was one of you—and I came but never went—and now it is too late. Which is why I repeat, in all respect, that even if you stay, it will not be necessary to marry Tamea. Let the world go by, if you choose—you are the best judge of your wisdom in that regard—but remember that down under the Line it goes by very slowly, my son. These islands are not for white men—that is, your kind of white man—unless you contemplate vegetating and going to pieces mentally, morally and physically before you are forty. The sun does things to fair-haired and blue-eyed men and women down in the latitude and longitude of Riva. You will not be happy there, Mr. Pritchard, and one of these days when I drop in at Riva you'll hear your white world calling

—and the Chink will dig up another two thousand dollars for me. And when you leave, Mr. Pritchard, it would be well to have no *legal* appendages."

Dan was silent. He wanted to bash this tropical philosopher over the head with a belaying pin and cause him to stow forever his insulting and impossible advice. But—he reflected—if he did that he would be delayed getting to Riva and Tamea, and he could not bear that she should suffer one moment longer than necessary. Hackett read his thoughts.

"We will not discuss this subject again, Mr. Pritchard," he said gently. "I have said my say because I have felt it my duty to do so. Personally, I don't give a damn what happens to you, but I should not care to see Gaston's daughter made unhappy. I have roved through these islands some thirty years and I know what I know. Have a cigar. They're genuine Sumatras. A bit dry, but if you like a dry cigar—— No? Well, you needn't grow huffy."

Dan continued his swift walk up and down the deck and Hackett continued to smoke contemplatively. After a while he said:

"I'm going to install an ice-making machine with part of the two thousand dollars the Chink paid me. Going to sea is a hard life and I make enough money for my owners to entitle me to do myself rather well. One does grow a bit weary of boiled Scotch and tepid wines."

CHAPTER XXVIII

TWO weeks later the brown crew of the Pelorus set Dan Pritchard and Sooey Wan ashore in the whaleboat.

"I'll drop in here on my way back—say a year hence," Captain Hackett promised him as they shook hands at the Jacob's-ladder. "I'm a little bit curious about you and when I'm curious about anybody I have to find out. I think six months will be long enough to cure you, however. Good-by, Mr. Pritchard, and good luck to you. Kiss the bride for me and—forgive me if I venture to remind you once more—you really do not have to marry her! Tamea hasn't any very serious thoughts on the validity or the sanctity of marriage. It is, comparatively, a recent institution here." He shook a horny finger at Dan and answered the latter's scowl with a mellow laugh. Dan thought he might be just a little bit jingled a few hours earlier than was his wont. Strange man. Dan had an idea he had fallen from high estate.

A Kanaka sailor carried Dan ashore from the boat through the wash of the surf, and followed with Dan's trunk. Sooey Wan, presumed to be a person of no

importance, struggled ashore in water up to his knees, and the moment he found himself high and dry on the shingle he looked about him with interest. What he saw was a half mile of white beach with a fringe of tufted coconut palms leaning seaward, a few canoes hauled up on the beach, a large corrugated iron godown and a small wooden bungalow, painted white with green trimmings and wide, deep verandas, squatted on the low bluff above the beach.

From the veranda of this bungalow a white man detached himself and came down over the bluff to meet them. He introduced himself as the Reverend Cyrus Muggridge, the resident missionary. He was a gloomy, liverish sort of man and Dan had a feeling that to Mr. Muggridge his martyrdom in Riva was a thing of the flesh and scarcely of the spirit. He repaid the reverend gentleman's compliment in kind and introduced himself. Then, because he observed in the missionary's eyes an unspoken query, he said:

"Are you, by any chance, Mr. Muggridge, acquainted with Miss Tamea Larrieau, who is, I understand, the last blood of the ancient chiefs of Riva?"

"I am, unhappily, acquainted with the young woman," Muggridge replied wearily, and added, "She is, like her father, wholly irreclaimable."

"Perhaps you would be so good as to direct me to her home?" Dan suggested. "That is, if she has ar-

rived in Riva recently, as I have reason to suspect she may have. You seem a bit shy on population, Mr. Muggridge," he added parenthetically.

"I think my last census showed some four hundred souls, but since then we have had two epidemics of influenza and the birth rate has scarcely kept pace with the mortality rate. Really, I must have another census. Counting them roughly, I should say that the total population of the island is two hundred and fifty, of which, perhaps, thirty families reside in the village."

"Where is the village?"

"About a quarter of a mile up a valley which runs up to those mountains from the sea. Miss Larrieau, by the way, is again in Riva. She arrived a week ago and has taken up her residence in her old home. I will point it out to you, Mr. Pritchard."

"Thank you, sir."

"You are, perhaps, wondering why none of my people are present," Mr. Muggridge continued. "You have unfortunately arrived in mid-afternoon, when my people are sleeping or, what is more probable, over in the river bathing."

The Kanaka sailors having disposed Dan's baggage above high-water mark, the whaleboat pulled back to the ship and was hoisted aboard even while the Pelorus slowly came about and headed for the open sea again. Mr. Muggridge, evidently greatly pleased at the pros-

pect of white company—and a gentleman at that—courteously led the way to the white bungalow and extended to Dan and his servant the hospitality of his home.

"Thank you, Mr. Muggridge," said Dan gratefully. "I shall be most happy to accept your invitation—for the present at least. May I ask you to point out to me Miss Larrieau's habitation?"

Mr. Muggridge's eyebrows went up perceptibly. What a hurry this well bred, respectable-looking stranger was in to see that half-caste Jezebel! "Follow the road up past the church yonder until you come to the river, which you will cross on two coco palm logs. They are very slippery. Be careful. Having crossed the bridge, turn to the left and follow the path up the hill to a house that is as distinctly a white man's dwelling as my own. You should find the lady you seek asleep on the veranda."

"Thank you, Mr. Muggridge. If you don't mind, I think I shall run up to Miss Larrieau's house."

"Dinner will be served at five-thirty," the missionary warned him. "I shall have my servant help your man bring the baggage up to your room."

Tamea's home stood in a grove of coco palms, interspersed with some flowering shrubs and a few lesser trees with luxuriant green foliage. The house had been built on a solid foundation of cement and creosoted redwood underpinning, to protect it from the

native wood-devouring insects. Dan suspected that the green paint which had at some distant date been applied to the house was anti-fouling—the sort of paint used on ships' bottoms to protect them from teredos. From under the house the snouts of half a dozen young pigs, taking their siesta, protruded, and in the yard a stately gamecock and some hens were prospecting for worms. The place smelled a little of neglect, of semi-decayed vegetation, of insanitation—the smell peculiar to the homes of native dwellers in the tropics. A well worn flight of five steps led up from the front of the house to the veranda, from which one might glean a view of miles of coast-line. About the place there was a silence so profound that Dan feared he might have come too late, after all.

He mounted the steps and rapped at a door with bronze screening on it. There was no answer, so he opened the door and gazed into a large living room. On the floor was a huge, blue, very old and very valuable Chinese rug; in the center of this rug stood a large, plain table, of native hardwood and—so Dan judged—native workmanship. In a corner he saw a grand piano and on top of the piano Tamea's accordion and a mandolin and some scattered music. A few chairs and hardwood benches arranged along the wall under windows which ran the full length of each wall and which, when it was desired to ventilate the house, dropped down into a pocket after the fashion of a

train window, completed the furnishings, with the exception of half a dozen rudely framed sketches of native life, and ships at sea.

"Nobody home," thought Dan, and walked around the veranda on three sides of the house. On the fourth side, which gave upon the vivid green mountain peak in the background and into which the late afternoon sun could not penetrate, Dan paused.

Before him, on a folding cot, with a native mat spread over it, Tamea lay, with her head pillowed on her left arm and her face turned slightly toward him. Her eyes were closed, but she was not asleep, for even as Dan gazed upon the beloved face he saw tears creep out from between the shut lids, saw the beautiful, semi-naked body shaken by an ill suppressed sob. Two swift strides and he was kneeling beside her, and as she opened her eyes and sought to rise at sight of him, his arms went around her and strained her to his heart while his lips kissed her tear-dimmed eyes.

Thus, long, he held her, while her heart pounded madly against his breast and the pent-up sorrow of weeks struggled with the rhapsody of that one perfect moment and left her weak and trembling, able only to gasp: "Ah, beloved! Beloved! You have come! Is it then that you love your Tamea—after all?"

He held her closer and in that tremendous moment his soul overflowed and he mingled, unashamed, his tears with hers. "Yes, love, I have come," he an-

swered chokingly. "You could not be happy with me in my country—so I have come to be happy with you—in yours."

"You come—you mean you come to stay—that you have left—Maisie—your friends——"

"I am here, Tamea. I love you. I cannot live without you. I need you—when you left me you did not understand."

"I understand now," she whispered. "Captain Hackett of the Pelorus was at pains to explain for you, but I could not believe then. But—you have come to Riva—so now I understand. Captain Hackett was right, so let there be no more explanations. Ah, dear one, my heart is bursting with love for you. If you had not come life would have lost its taste and your Tamea would have died."

"Don't," he pleaded, "don't," and held her closer. "From this moment until death we shall not be separated. Tonight we shall go to Mr. Muggridge and be married."

Tamea was suddenly thoughtful. "Since I have been away the wife of the missionary has died, and he is mad about your Tamea. Before I left Riva it was his habit to follow me about and in his eyes there was that look I know and hate. I have been home a week and his madness has increased a hundredfold. Dear one, I am afraid of him."

"You need not be," Dan assured her and stroked

the glorious head of her. "I met Mr. Muggridge half an hour ago when I landed and I observed that he seemed interested when I asked about you. He looked to me like a man with a fire in his soul. . . . Well, he's a minister of the Gospel, however, so I dare say if he struggles hard enough he can put the fire out long enough to pronounce us man and wife."

"But—a license is necessary if we would marry after the fashion of your people, beloved," she reminded him. "And there is no law in Riva, although the island is claimed by the French Government."

"It will be better than no marriage at all, Tamea."

She smiled. "Such a queer, strange people, you all-whites," was her comment. "It is not a marriage but a substitute, yet you would ask this man to perform a mummery to satisfy something in you that is a heritage from your ancestors. I have no such heritage. For me, no mumbling of words by this mad priest is necessary to happiness."

"Well, they are necessary to me, strange as it may seem to you, Tamea," Dan replied with his shy smile. "You are half white and I am all white and it is my purpose to dwell with you on a white basis. Therefore, we will wed according to the custom of my people."

"As you will," Tamea agreed. "Is it that this matter touches your honor if I will it otherwise?"

He nodded. "Then come to Mr. Muggridge," the girl urged, and led him by the hand down the hill to

the missionary's house. Sooey Wan was standing in the doorway and at sight of Tamea he uncovered respectfully.

"Faithful one," Tamea hailed him and gave him her hand in huge delight. Sooey Wan shook it gingerly, his yellow teeth flashing the while in an ecstatic grin.

At the sound of voices and footsteps on the veranda, Mr. Muggridge came out. "You have returned quite soon, Mr. Pritchard," he began, and then his glance rested on Tamea. "Well?" he demanded irritably.

"Mr. Muggridge," Dan said to him, "it is my desire that you should marry Mademoiselle Larrieau and me at once."

The missionary grew pale and his somber eyes grew even more somber. "I shall require her father's permission before performing the ceremony, Mr. Pritchard," he said with an effort.

"Her father is dead, Mr. Muggridge."

"Have you a license of any sort?"

"No. Is it your custom to require a license when performing the marriage ceremony between two of your converts?"

"No, indeed. My people do not understand what a license is, and it has been deemed unnecessary to insist upon it with these primitive people. In your case, however——"

"I understand that white man's law is non-operative in Riva," Dan interrupted. "The sole regulations of

this island have been promulgated by you and other missionaries, have they not?"

Mr. Muggridge nodded, his blazing eyes still fastened on Tamea.

"Well," Dan explained earnestly, "in the absence of white law I desire you to marry me according to missionary law. I wish to feel that my marriage has been sanctioned by a representative of a Christian faith. I am a Christian."

"A true Christian would not marry this woman, sir."

"I did not come here to argue with you, Mr. Muggridge. It is my firm intention to dwell in Riva with Tamea and I prefer to dwell with her in accordance with the custom of my own people."

"I must decline to perform the ceremony," said Muggridge doggedly. "In your case, without a license, should I perform this ceremony, I would be sanctioning your right to live with this woman in defiance of the law of the land."

"But there is no law, Mr. Muggridge."

"There is," said the missionary tersely. "I am the Law, and in this matter I am inexorable."

"You're a lunatic. You're as crazy as a March hare," Dan retorted hotly.

"It is because he has looked upon me with desire," said Tamea coolly. "Come, beloved. It is foolish to argue with one who is quite mad."

She took his hand and led him back up the hill and out on to the edge of the high headland that gave a view of the entire eastern coast of the island. Inland, a high conical peak, which Dan now realized was a volcano, lifted some four thousand feet into the sky, now rapidly darkening as the sun sank. Still holding Dan's hand, Tamea took her stand beside him.

"Dear one," she said, "if you would take me to wife, then must it be after the fashion of my people, since it is plainly impossible that it can be after the fashion of yours. I think I understand how it is that you would take me to wife. You would be very serious, very sincere, very solemn. It is something you would not do lightly."

He nodded and the girl, turning, pointed to the volcano. From the crater a rosy glow was beginning to appear, cast against the sky, and as twilight crept over Riva this glow deepened.

"My heart," said Tamea softly, "is like unto the hot heart of Hakataua yonder. Throughout the day the sunlight beats down the glow so that no man may see it, but with the coming of night comes the glow that all men may see it, even those afar at sea in ships. With the coming of night I yearn for you, beloved; the flame of my desire burns high and I am unashamed that I desire you as all true women must desire a mate." She turned and kissed him solemnly and tenderly. "I love you, heart of my heart," she told him, "and though

I live to be as old as Hakataua, I swear, by your God, never shall I love any man but you, Dan Pritchard. And, loving you, I shall respect you and obey you, nor shall I bring dishonor or shame upon you, my husband. Here, in the presence of the sea and the earth and the sky, I make my promise. While I can make you happy that promise shall hold, but when I can no longer please you then are you released. For that is the way of my people."

"Here in the presence of God," Dan Pritchard murmured, with bowed head and a full heart, "I take thee, Tamea, for my lawful wife, to have and to hold, in honor, always." And he kissed her now, solemnly, tenderly, without passion.

"My husband," she said happily, "now it will not be necessary to beg that mad Muggridge to quench the fire in his soul."

"Poor devil," Dan answered her, and together they returned to the green bungalow. They found Sooey Wan sitting on the steps, mopping his high, bony forehead.

"Kitchen lady queen no hab got. Cookee no can do," he complained bitterly. "House where leavee trunk kitchen hab got. Cookee can do."

"You mean that missionary's house, Sooey Wan?"

The old Chinaman nodded.

"Well, we'll have to get along without his kitchen, I think, Sooey Wan." He turned to Tamea. "Have

you no kitchen, dear? Strange that your father should build and furnish a house such as this and yet not provide a kitchen."

"When my father and I left Riva, we did not bother to take anything out of this house. Upon my return many things were missing. All were returned by my people with the exception of the stove, which fell from the shoulders of the men who carried it and was destroyed."

"Sooey Wan isn't accustomed to cooking over an open fire. He will be continuously peeved and develop into a frightful nuisance."

"I shall have my serving women wait upon my husband," Tamea assured him lightly. "As for this servant of yours, let his task be the catching of fish, which will provide him with amusement. He has labored long and faithfully in your house, dear one. He has earned his rest."

"I hope he can see his way clear to take it," Dan sighed. Then, turning to his servant: "Sooey Wan, you're retired. You do not have to cook any more. From now on your job will consist in enjoying yourself. Tomorrow we'll find some sort of habitation for you, but for tonight park yourself on the veranda."

Sooey Wan vouchsafed no reply, until Tamea had entered the house and he found himself alone for a moment with his master. "Boss," he then said confidentially, "missionaly heap klazy. Look out. Sooey

Wan look out." And he permitted the butt of a long-barreled Colt's .45 to slide down from his voluminous sleeve. "Sooey Wan no likee. That missionaly ketchum devil inside heap plenty."

CHAPTER XXIX

TEN months had passed since Dan Pritchard had seen a human being whiter than Tamea or talked English to a white man. He was acutely conscious of this flight of time as he sat on the veranda of the green bungalow and watched a schooner beating up the coast of Riva.

"I wouldn't be surprised if that's the Pelorus, Tamea," he remarked. "Even at this distance her lines look too fine for an ordinary trading schooner. I hope she drops in. I'd like to have a visit with Hackett. That man has a superior mind."

Tamea glanced sharply at him from under lowered lids. Her lips trembled ever so slightly and she bit them to stop the trembling. At length she said: "Yes, that is the Pelorus, dear heart. She will drop anchor in the lagoon for the night and Hackett will come ashore to visit us. Doubtless he has supplies for the mission."

"Won't it be splendid to have him up for dinner, Tamea? Confound it, I wish we had a really decent dinner to offer him. He must be as weary of canned goods, chicken, fish and pig as I am."

To this Tamea made no reply, but her sweet face was slightly clouded as she sat down at the piano and commenced picking out a hymn by ear. Her basses were not very good, and the piano, hard driven for many a year without tuning, rendering sterling assistance in the attack upon Dan's nerves. He rose and walked out of the house and down the hill to the beach, where he sat on an upturned canoe and waited patiently for the Pelorus to negotiate the opening in the reef. She did it prettily enough, and as her anchor splashed overside and the harsh grating of the chain in her hawse-pipe floated across the lagoon to Dan, for a reason scarcely possible for analysis, a lump rose in his throat.

Perhaps it was the impending drama of a meeting with his own kind after ten months of alien association that thrilled him so, for he rose and ran down to the wash of the surf on the white shingle, hallooing and waving his arms. Two men on the poop waved back at him. One wore a singlet, a short pair of white trousers and a Panama hat. The other was arrayed in white linen and, at that distance, reminded Dan of a yacht owner out with his guests for a cruise.

The whaleboat splashed overboard and the two men dropped overside into it and were rowed ashore. The man in the short breeks and singlet was Captain Hackett. He leaped overboard as the whaleboat grounded and splashed through the wash, with out-

stretched hand, his face wearing a hearty but cynical smile.

"How do you do, Mr. Pritchard?" he cried. "Do not bother to answer. I know. You don't do worth two squirts of bilge water." He shook hands. "Riva on your nerves a bit?" He laughed. "Well, they always wait for us at the edge of the surf—the 'back to nature and the simple life' boys." He slapped the embarrassed Dan on the shoulder. "Got a friend of yours with me." He turned and waved toward a Kanaka sailor upon whose back was just mounting, preparatory to being carried ashore so his feet would not get wet, no less a person than—Mark Mellenger!

"Mel!" Dan's cry of welcome sounded suspiciously like a sob. "Mel, my dear old friend! Lord, man, what a joy to see you again!" And he folded Mellenger to his heart and was silent for a minute, fighting his emotions.

"It's Thursday night, old son," said Mellenger calmly, "so I thought I'd drop around for dinner—as usual. Is Sooey Wan still dishing up the grub in your Lares and Penates?" He cuffed Dan affectionately on the ear. "I'm sort of halfway glad to see you again, Dan."

They walked up the beach to the Muggridge residence. Captain Hackett paused beside the veranda and looked the house over critically. "Where is the sky pilot?" he queried.

"He's dead, Captain. His wife died shortly before you were here last. Before that he had been a little bit obsessed by Tamea and after his wife's death he rather went on the loose among the natives. I imagine he was about half cracked——"

"Half?" Hackett sneered. "All. He was half cracked when he came here, otherwise he would not have come. His wife was the last tie that bound him to his self-respect, and when she died, doubtless it commenced to dawn on him that she had been a martyr to a cause not particularly worth while. The heat and the loneliness killed her. I could see it coming."

"I dare say you are right, Captain. She was, as you say, the last tie that bound him to his self-respect. Here, where there was no law save his, after Gaston left and before I came, there was no longer any incentive to remain a white man, and he started to degenerate. Religion was not sufficient to sustain him. He had an uphill job here, at best, and there was nothing to read except the Bible and he had known that by heart for twenty years. I wouldn't talk to him and neither would Tamea."

"Why?"

"Because he was half crazy. When he wasn't striving to convert Tamea he was reviling her for an abandoned woman. Of course I had to put a stop to that, and when I did he reviled me. Finally I warned him to stay off the hill. But he wouldn't. He came

prowling up there one night and set fire to our house. Sooey Wan caught him and we put out the fire before any damage had been done. A week later I heard shooting outside our veranda—three rifle shots and six pistol shots. Muggridge owned the only rifle on the island and Sooey Wan owned the only pistol—and he slept on the veranda.

"In the morning Muggridge was gone, there were three bullet holes through our house and Sooey Wan was cleaning his .45 with kerosene. He said nothing and I asked no questions. I did not care to know."

"Comfortable old Chink, that, to have around one's house," Hackett remarked dryly. "Well, I have a year's supply of grub and trade goods for the mission, so I suppose I might as well dump it here to await the arrival of the successor to the mad Muggridge. It's all paid for."

"Comforting. I'll use it, Hackett."

Mellenger walked up into the mission house veranda and sat down. "It's as cool here as anywhere," he reminded Dan. "I'd like to have a chat with you, Dan, before I meet Tamea."

"Certainly, Mel."

"Well, while my crew is busy landing the supplies for the mission I'm going up to your house and have a chin-chin with Tamea," Captain Hackett suggested. "By the way, Mr. Pritchard," he added innocently, "did you marry her?"

Dan flushed. "Muggridge, in his insane jealousy, refused to perform the ceremony without some sort of a license, procurable God knows where—or when—so we—that is—well, we did the best we could without him."

The old sea dog went up the path to the hill, chuckling softly.

"Mel," Dan demanded the instant the captain was out of hearing, "what under the canopy has brought you here?"

"I came to get you and bring you home."

Dan shook his head. "My home is here, Mel." He threw out his arm tragically toward the east. "I'm quite through with all of that."

"Fortunately, you are not. Your private fortune and the business formerly owned by Casson and Pritchard await your return. There's a hole amounting to approximately half a million dollars in your private fortune but the business is all yours now and intact. As soon as you appear to relieve the receiver of his task of managing your affairs, the court will discharge him."

Dan Pritchard stared at his friend, wide unbelief in his glance. "Explain yourself, Mel. This is most astounding."

"Some folks are fools for luck," Mellenger sighed. "Banning and Company paid forty-two cents on the dollar and that receiver managed to pry fifty cents on

the dollar out of the Katsuma estate. Other losses were not as heavy as anticipated, and several of your heaviest debtors will manage to pay out in three or four years, if your luck holds. The thing that saved you, however, was a typhoon in the China Sea. The steamer Malayan, with eight thousand tons of high-priced rice insured to its full value, must have foundered in that typhoon, for she never reached Havana and was eventually posted at Lloyd's as missing. Consequently the receiver collected the insurance, which put your business back on its feet again. You're still a rich man, Dan."

Dan Pritchard placed his elbows on his knees and covered his face with his hands. He quivered a little. Mellenger ignored him. He lighted one of Hackett's Sumatra cigars and puffed away silently, gazing out to the white water purling over the reef.

"Peaceful spot, this," he observed presently. "The Land of Never Worry. How are you fixed for points of intellectual contact?"

"I haven't any," Dan confessed in a strangled voice.

"Been doing any painting, old son?"

"Half a dozen canvases. They're no good."

"You haven't asked me about Maisie Morrison, Dan."

"I haven't any right to, Mel."

"Then I shall tell you about her. She is in good health, but not very happy. That is because she loves

you. Splendid woman, Maisie. You made a grave mistake by not marrying her. I told you to."

"I didn't think she cared—that much."

"It appears she did. Everybody knew that except you, and sometimes I think you suspected it, but were afraid to take a chance. If you had your chance all over again, would you marry Maisie?"

"Mel," Dan admitted wretchedly, "any man is a fool to marry out of his class. Tamea is a wonderful woman, but——"

"I understand, my friend. It requires something more than love to sustain love. Is Riva on your nerves?"

Dan raised his haggard face from his hands. "Well, I am beginning to understand Muggridge a little better lately," he confessed. "And, unlike poor Muggridge, I have nothing spiritual to cling to. Nothing but my sanity, and sometimes when I reflect that all of my future life will be like this——"

"Ah, but it will not continue to be like this," Mellenger interrupted gently. "Tamea will see to that."

"Tamea is a lovely, wonderful child of nature. She is happy here—so happy, Mel, that she will never, never be able to understand why I cannot be happy, too."

"As usual," Mellenger growled, "you continue to give abundant proof of your monumental asininity and masculine ego. I have here a letter which Tamea wrote

Maisie three months ago, via the schooner Doris Crane."

Dan could only stare at him. "You know the Doris Crane, of course?" Mellenger queried.

"She came here three months ago for the accumulated trade. I was pig-hunting on the northern coast of the island at the time, and missed her. Mel, what could Tamea possibly have to write Maisie about?"

"About you, fool."

"About me?"

"None other. Hold your peace now, old son, while I read you her letter to Maisie." And Mellenger read:

Riva, 16th August.

Dear Maisie:

Please read this letter from one who has spoiled much that was beautiful, one who has taken the taste out of three lives, yours, Dan Pritchard's and my own.

Maisie, Dan Pritchard is here with me. He is my husband, and to me he is very kind and loving and faithful. When he came first it was his desire to marry me according to the way of your people, but the missionary here was mad and would not oblige him, so we were married according to the desire of our hearts. In the presence of the sea and the earth and the sky we swore, each to the other, that we would love each other and dwell together in honor. This we have done. But Dan is no longer happy. Life slowly loses its taste for him. I have watched and I know. He is very lonely, nor can all of my love compensate him for the loss of his friends, for the loss of the world that was his. I know he feels as sometimes I felt

when I dwelled in his house in San Francisco, and that is terrible.

The thought has come to me that if Dan lives here he will some day grow to hate me. And I shall some day be too unlovely to hold him. These things cannot be helped. They are a part of life. My love wearies him even now. He is nervous and unhappy and sometimes he withdraws from my caresses, and last night in his sleep he spoke of you and his sorrow because you had not loved him. Perhaps you do not know this truth, Maisie, but men can never love as women love. It is very foolish to expect this. A woman can love one man until death, but a man can love two women, or even more, but he will love best that woman who gives to him the most comfort and peace of mind, the woman who makes few demands and who refrains from forcing love upon him when he is unhappy.

Dan Pritchard does not like my people. We are as oil and water. He does not like the food we have here, nor the heat nor the rain nor the silence nor the loneliness. He would have his own people about him. Alas, I would have mine about me. He fits not into my world, nor can I ever fit into his. Therefore, it is wise that we should part. I would not have him in unhappiness. Rather would I die.

Maisie, come for him. Please! Evil will befall him if you do not. If you love him as I think you do, you will come; nor will pride—the false pride of a woman—keep you from your happiness. Dan was always your man, Maisie. Never was he truly mine. I do not know why, but this is true. I would give him back to you, Maisie. Please come. TAMEA.

Mellenger folded the letter and put it back in his pocket. Dan hid his face in his hands and wept.

"Poor child," Mellenger murmured. "She has never heard that pity is akin to love—that she stirred in you all the profound pity and tenderness of your naturally kind and chivalrous heart. I wouldn't feel so badly about it if I were you, Dan. You weep now because your love lies dead and you have killed it. You merely made a very human mistake. So did Tamea. But she realizes it and has the courage to confess it. Old son, your romance is at an end."

"I shall not abandon her, Mel," Dan cried brokenly. "My unhappiness shall not be paid off against hers. She's too tremendously fine, too noble."

"That is true. She is too tremendously fine, too noble, to permit you to dramatize yourself for her sake. There is only one sacrifice necessary here, and Tamea is making it—gladly, without regret and all because she possesses in full measure a love so wonderful, so glorious that no man can ever possibly understand it or appreciate it. There will be no pandering to your ego, my son. You are no longer infatuated with Tamea, she knows it and you might as well acknowledge it. Heroics are quite unnecessary. Tamea, I take it, does not desire them and I shall not permit them."

"But Maisie. What of her, Mel?"

"Well, when she received this letter she sent for me

and gave it to me to read. She knew I was your friend so she sought my counsel. I asked her pointblank if she loved you and she said she did. I asked her why she had permitted you to escape and she told me. I think I can understand her point of view. Then I asked her if she had any conception of your point of view in this triangle and she said she thought she understood enough of it to forgive you. I know you rather well, Dan, and I tried to paint for Maisie a word picture of you as I know you. I told her that you had never been truly in love with Tamea but rather in love with love.

"It is your nature to idealize everything. You yearned for a high romance and Tamea was a romantic figure. She appealed to you physically and romantically. She aroused your pity, she stirred you and set your soul afire, and neither of you knew that it was the sort of conflagration that burns itself out and leaves only a heap of ashes—ashes of sorrow and regret. I tried to make Maisie see that it was largely her fault. She had declined to reach forth and possess you as Tamea, in her primitive innocence, did not hesitate to do.

"I asked her if the memory of this escapade of yours would cloud her future happiness, if she should marry you, and she said she thought she could manage to forget it." Mellenger paused and gazed out to sea through half closed eyes. "As a matter of fact," he

continued, "there is not the slightest necessity that anybody in our world need know what has happened. You have merely been knocking around the isles of the South Sea, painting and enjoying yourself. Nobody knows except Tamea, Maisie, you, Hackett and myself —and none of us will ever tell."

"But, Mel, Maisie refused to marry me. If she had, this would never have happened."

"You are a sublimated idiot. You never told Maisie that you loved her. Women love love, too. You dawdled around, wishful to have your cake and eat it, hating the freedom of your bachelorhood, yet dreading to abandon it, restless, perturbed, unhappy—ah, you're a *nut*. Understand? A NUT!"

By his silence under fire Dan admitted the truth of this charge and instantly the great-hearted Mellenger was sorry he had spoken. He laid his hand gently on his friend's shoulder.

"Buck up, old son," he pleaded. "At least you've done your best to be a gentleman all through this affair. Maisie understands that."

"Tamea asked Maisie to come and get me. Did she come? Is she here?"

"She is aboard the Pelorus now. Old Casson and his wife think she is in Tahiti. Nothing wrong with taking a summer trip to Tahiti, is there? What the old folks do not know will not worry them. Well, we came down on the same steamer and in the harbor at

Tahiti we found the Pelorus. When I told Hackett that I wanted to charter his vessel for a passage to Riva, he eyed me curiously and said he had been expecting somebody to come along and charter him for that trip. Then it developed that he knew you. He wanted more money than Maisie and I could scrape up, but when I informed him of this he said he'd collect the deficit at Riva. Said he'd draw a draft on your Chinese bank. So he cleaned up a stateroom for Maisie and shipped a real cook. He has an ice plant in his hold and we had a pleasant trip. Hackett is a most agreeable man and for a monetary consideration is prepared to carry us all directly to San Francisco."

"Sorry, but I can't go," Dan repeated doggedly. "Nor will I inflict on myself the pain of seeing Maisie."

"Better toddle along home and talk it over with Tamea," his friend suggested patiently. "You may change your mind after that."

Without a word Dan left him. On the way up the hill he met the master of the Pelorus coming down. "I'll send up a couple of my boys to carry down your trunk," he told Dan. "Your Tamea is packing it now." And he smiled his knowing little smile and continued on toward the mission.

Tamea met Dan as he came up the stairs. "Tamea, dear," he began, "what does this mean?"

"You have talked to Mellenger. You know what it means. When I took you for my husband, *chéri*, I

said: 'I will take you and cherish you only so long as I may make you happy.' That time has passed. You are no longer happy, so I have arranged that you shall leave me. There must be no argument."

"Tamea," he almost groaned, "I cannot bear to break your heart."

She smiled sadly. "My heart will not be broken. It will be hurt but time will cure that. I do not wish you to remain longer. If you do I shall be much more unhappy than if you go away. You will, perhaps, not understand, but these are true words, dear one. We have both made a large mistake and it would be foolish not to admit it and strive to mend that mistake."

He bowed his head. "And you truly desire this, Tamea?"

"With all my heart," she answered. She came to him and placed her arms around his neck. "Love of my life," she said softly, and in her voice the stored-up pathos and longing of her shattered life vibrated, "you will kiss me once and then you will go—quickly."

"Oh, sweetheart!" he moaned.

"Sh-h," she pleaded. "I desire this parting, dear love, and because I desire it I have been to some pains and expense to accomplish it. Here you are as a fish cast up on the beach. You gasp and struggle for life and in the end you will die—living. I understand, darling. *Chéri*, believe me, I understand truly, and there is naught to grieve over."

She kissed him and clung to him, wet-eyed and trembling, but resolute. "Now, dear love, you will go," she whispered, "nor will you look back as you descend the hill. And sometimes you will think of your Tamea who loved you better than you will ever be loved again. Adieu, my husband."

She left him abruptly. He stood for about a minute, his thoughts inchoate, his brain numbed; yet, out of the chaos of his conflicting emotions there rose, almost subconsciously, the tiniest flicker of relief. He hated himself for it. He felt low and mean and treacherous, felt that he had played a sorry part, indeed, yet he had not meant to do this, nor had he even contemplated doing it. The situation existed, that was all, nor could any power of his or Tamea's alter it in the slightest. As well strive to restrain a falling star!

His heart constricted, his eyes blurred with tears of sorrow and shame, he turned away at last and stumbled down the path to the Muggridge bungalow. Hackett and Mellenger, seeing him coming, walked around to the opposite side of the house, in order that he might be spared the humiliation of knowing they had seen him with his soul laid bare. Straight for the whaleboat, drawn up at the edge of the wash, Dan headed, and the Kanaka sailors, seeing him coming, ran the boat into the surf until it floated; there they held it, waiting; and when Dan Pritchard climbed wearily in, they pulled him out to the Pelorus.

Up on the veranda of the mission house Captain Hackett produced two of his famous Sumatra cigars. "We'll give him a couple of hours in which to straighten out his record with Miss Morrison," the maritime philosopher suggested. "Smoke up."

Mellenger took the cigar, but he did not light it. "I think I shall make a brief call on Tamea," he declared. "I really think she would enjoy seeing me, and until the Pelorus leaves Riva, I imagine Tamea will have herself rather well under control. How does one reach her habitation?"

Hackett described the way and Mellenger left him. On the steps of Tamea's home he found Sooey Wan seated; the old Chinaman looked angry and disconsolate, but at sight of Mellenger his yellow fangs showed in a glad smile of welcome. He rose, proffered his hand, which Mellenger grasped heartily, and for several seconds they stood, looking into each other's faces; then the look of desolation sifted back over Sooey Wan's face and he shook his head dolefully.

"Missa Mel," he quavered, "evelybody clazy. Pitty soon Sooey Wan clazy, too."

"Yes, Sooey, my friend," Mellenger replied, "everybody is. In fact, I'm half crazy myself. Where is Tamea?"

Sooey Wan jerked a thumb over his shoulder. "Lady queen packum tlunk, Missa Mel."

Mellenger entered the house. In the center of the

living room Tamea sat, folding Dan's well worn linen and packing it away in trunk trays. She looked up at his entrance—and stared unbelievingly a moment before scrambling to her feet and rushing to him with outstretched arms.

"Mellengair! Mellengair, my friend!" she cried, and then she was sobbing out, upon that great, understanding heart, the agony she had seen fit to repress in the presence of Dan. He held her to him, stroking the beautiful head but saying nothing, for he knew that her full heart was emptying itself, that she would be the better for her tears.

Presently she ceased to sob, but still she clung to him; long, heart-breaking sighs finally told Mellenger that she was getting herself under control once more. Gently he lifted her face and with his own handkerchief dried her eyes. "Poor Tamea!" he murmured. "Poor, unhappy, misunderstood waif!"

"Do not pity me, my friend," she pleaded. "It is the fate of half-breeds to dwell in a world apart; in time we learn to make the best of it." She smiled wanly. "It was, perhaps, unfortunate for me that my father was Gaston of the Beard. He put upon me the imprint of his own soul. So I see too clearly, I understand too readily, I feel too deeply." She lifted his great hand and laid her cheek against the back of it. "Once I hurt you, Mellengair. I am sorry. I have wept many tears because I have called you Stoneface."

"Don't! Please don't!" he pleaded hoarsely. "I didn't mind. Really, I didn't."

"You are a kind liar." She kissed his hand humbly. "And now," she added, with just a suspicion of a quaver in her voice, "it is your friend, Tamea, who is Stoneface—always to look out to sea for that which came—and went—and will never, never come again."

Mellenger's poker face twitched ever so slightly. "I am here to help you. Tell me how."

"There can be no help, Mel. Dan is very unhappy with me. He loves me, but he is not happy with me, and it has come to the knowledge that never can the poor boy be happy with me. Great unhappiness is stronger than great love. It will kill love—and I have watched and his love is dying. I would have him leave me, loving me. If he remains he will grow mad, like that missionary Muggridge. Something in him that is fine and very like a little boy will wither and die."

Mellenger nodded and Tamea continued: "To Dan also has been given the gift of seeing too clearly, understanding too readily, feeling too deeply."

"Dan is my friend," said Mellenger. "He has many virtues. He is lovable. But he is too much given to introspection. He thinks too much about himself and too little about others. He has not known great happiness and he has been eager to protect the little he has known. He has a restless soul, always poised for

flight. In a word, he is utterly selfish and doesn't know it. He would be highly insulted if he heard me say so, and he knows as much about women as a pig does about the binomial theorem."

Tamea smiled wistfully. "Yes, he knows little of women. He is not observing, and, as you say, I think it is because he thinks overmuch about what each new day may bring him. I am to be the mother of his child, but he does not know this—and I have, for reasons of my own, not told him."

"Ah!" Mellenger gasped. "That complicates matters. You are not married, I take it."

"No, not the way you take it. You will not tell this to Dan, of course."

"Of course I shall. If he is the father of your child he shall not evade the responsibility of fatherhood, although, to do him full justice, I do not think it would ever occur to him to evade it."

"In his world, Mellengair, it is not quite *au fait* to be the father of a quarter-bred Polynesian child while still a bachelor."

"It would be regarded as embarrassing."

"I would not have Dan embarrassed."

"You can obviate the embarrassment. Come with us to Tahiti and marry Dan legally before the child is born. Nobody in his world, then, need know."

"I could not be happy in Dan's world any more than he can be happy in mine. You do not seem to

understand, Mellengair. I love him. I do not delude myself, my friend. If I want him I can hold fast to him. I know my power. But I love him too greatly to hold him when the holding will smash his life. It is better that I should smash my own, for look you, Mellengair," she explained with an odd wistfulness, "I am but Tamea, the half-caste Queen of Riva. I am old—very old—and I—I do not matter. I have known the fulness of life. I am content. I cannot leave this land in which the roots of my soul will ever cling; always when I dwelt with Dan Pritchard in San Francisco I heard the sound of the surf on the reef yonder. I heard the sigh of these coco palms, I heard the songs and the woes of my people. You will, perhaps, not understand, Mellengair, but I know that I am right."

He bowed his head. He knew she was right, knew that only a great and noble soul could so calmly enunciate such a bitter truth. The old, immutable law of existence could not be shattered. Kind begets kind, yearns for it, is happy with nothing else. Human beings, habituated to their environment, cast in certain molds of evolution, may not progress forward or backward when such progression is not a part of the Infinite Plan. To attempt it is ruinous; to defy that immutable law—particularly in the case of superintelligences like Dan and Tamea—invites disaster.

"Dan Pritchard will go tonight and I shall not see him again," Tamea said, following the long silence

while Mellenger revolved this sad puzzle in his poor brain. "Farewells do but bear down the heart, and if I do not see him again it will be much easier for him, poor dear. He knows I love him. Why, then, tell him this at parting, why hurt him with my tears, why subject him to the shame of having me see him bent and broken? He will go. He greatly desires to go, and I know why, and it is the law and I am not embittered. Nothing matters in life save that human beings shall know true happiness—and I have known that. When my baby comes I shall know it again. I have in me the blood of my mother, and we were proud of our line. And I have in me the blood of my father and he was brave and laughed when the seas boiled over the knightheads. I too shall laugh."

"I dare say you do not care to visit Maisie, or have her visit you."

"You are right. You are always right, dear Stone-face. I give to her the man she loves, the man who, in the bottom of his heart, has always loved her, the man I took from her. From me he has learned something of life; at least I have not hurt him, nor have I dwelt with him in dishonor. He will be comforted by Maisie; life will have a taste for him again; and of his life here with me, none in his world should ever know. You see, I understand your people, Mellengair," she added, with that same odd, twisted, wistful little smile. "It is that you do not like to be found out."

Fell a silence. "You will go now, please, and take Dan Pritchard with you. Sooey Wan is ready and the sailors from the Pelorus will come for his trunk." She gave him her hand.

"May I kiss you, Tamea?" he whispered, and there was that in his deep-set, unlovely eyes, in his poker face, that might have been seen in the face of Christ, writhing on the Cross. She lifted her face to his and he kissed her, very tenderly, on each cheek, after the fashion of her father's people. Then he left her, and he descended the hill to the beach.

"Well?" said Hackett, as Mellenger came up on the Muggridge veranda and heaved himself wearily into a chair.

"I have just talked with the finest woman God Almighty ever made," Mellenger replied huskily. "Compared with her the noblest of men is so low he could kiss a flounder without bending his knees." He thoughtfully bit the end off the cigar Hackett had given him and the latter struck a match and held it to the tip of the cigar. "Brave, like her father," Mellenger continued. "Faces the issue without cringing. She is magnificent—perfectly tremendous!"

"Well, that's a comfort, Mr. Mellenger."

Fell a silence. Then: "Captain Hackett, when you return to the Pelorus, please send my dunnage ashore and have one of your men dump it in this veranda. I have decided to remain in Riva. I do not fancy that

long trip home with Dan and Maisie. My presence would make them both uncomfortable, and I am quite finished with my self-appointed task of directing that man's love affairs. He's a fine man but a poor lover."

"Nonsense, Mr. Mellenger," Hackett urged. "The Pelorus is a hundred and thirty feet long and there is room enough aboard her to make yourself scarce."

"Well, I have other reasons for staying. Unlike Dan Pritchard, I have no dollars calling me back. All I had was a heart-breaking job on a newspaper and I chucked that forever when I started for Riva. I have never had a vacation and I have a notion I'll enjoy knocking around in the islands. At any rate, I'm going to remain. Having no conscience to speak of, I will help myself to the supplies you are going to land for this deserted mission. I shall get along quite nicely."

"There is no accounting for the ways of white men," Captain Hackett declared. "Here comes the whale-boat, loaded with supplies." He held out his hand. "Happy days, Mr. Mellenger."

"Thank you. Good-by. Do not tell Dan I have stayed. He might take it into his fool head to come ashore and argue with me. And the next time you happen to be passing along the coast of Riva, drop in and say howdy. I might be ready to leave at that time."

CHAPTER XXX

WHEN Dan Pritchard descended into the main cabin of the Pelorus, he found Maisie seated there. She stared at him a moment, not recognizing in the brown, somewhat unkempt figure at the foot of the companion, the man she had known and loved in another world.

"It is I—Dan," he told her.

Maisie made no effort to rise. She knew she was unequal to the effort. "I—I came—to see if you—cared to come home, Dan," she said with difficulty. "Tamea wrote—asked me to come and get you. It has been very hard for me to do this, Dan. Perhaps you can understand why."

He came and took her hand in both of his, but made no movement toward a more affectionate greeting. He was not quite equal to such disloyalty so soon, even though at sight of Maisie his heart thrilled wildly. "I can understand your reluctance to running after any man, Maisie," he answered her. "Least of all myself."

"This situation is perfectly amazing. I cannot, even now, understand why I have come here, Dan."

"Perhaps it would be just as well not to try to

understand some things, Maisie," he pleaded. "Do you think it is possible for us to take up our lives where they were when we saw each other last? You know all about me, of course."

"Mark Mellenger was at some pains to attempt a long, scientific and, at times, reasonable, defense of masculine weaknesses in general and of yours in particular. Somehow, Dan, I cannot feel that you have been either weak or wicked. It—it—just happened. I cannot conceive that you would ever be less than a gentleman."

He bowed his head. "I have tried to be that, Maisie, although today I do not feel that I have succeeded. But I cannot do otherwise than leave Tamea. I do not think it would have occurred to me to leave her, no matter how bitter the price of staying, but—she willed it otherwise. We have parted without bitterness; I want you to know that so long as I live she shall remain a holy and tender memory."

"You love her?" Maisie choked on the query.

"I love her as one loves a beautiful and lovable child; for the nobility of soul she possesses I feel a tremendous reverence."

"I understand—being a woman. You have entertained for me something of that same affection, I think. Well, it is no fault of yours, is it, if you mistook infatuation for love?"

"Perhaps, at some future date, Maisie, it will not

seem so—so terrible—to discuss so intimately my feelings toward you or toward Tamea. I only know that —at last—I am quite certain of myself. I tried my best to play the game with Tamea, but I wasn't smart enough to conceal my true feelings from her, once those feelings became apparent to myself. She has the mind of a warlock. I—I—tried to love her, but—oh, my God, forgive me—we were as oil and water. We could not mix. I couldn't stand this place. There is beauty here and peace; life tiptoes by so serenely that the sameness of the days was driving me mad. I had no social intercourse—no points of intellectual contact—and every relative of Tamea's, no matter how distantly related—was dwelling under the mantle of our—of her —philanthropy. She loves them all and hasn't the heart to drive them away. It is the custom and she is the last of her blood. She will not alter the custom. I hate the food, I hate the smell of decaying vegetation, I hate the rain, I hate the music, I hate the sunshine —and the loneliness would, eventually, have driven me insane. That's what it did to Muggridge. I did some sketching the first few months. Since then I have had no heart for it. My mind is back in San Francisco; I can't shake off the memories of the old life. Tamea spends her days adoring me—and I'm sick of it. *I'm sick of it, I tell you. I'm fed up on love. I'm— I'm——*"

Maisie managed to stand up. She placed her hands

on Dan's shoulders. "Buck up, old booby," she murmured, with something of the adorable camaraderie that had charmed him so in happier days. "You are the victim of a terrible tragedy and so is poor Tamea. But she was wise enough to see that something radical had to be done—and she did it. You see, Dan'l, you weren't truly in love with Tamea and I knew it all the time. You were in love with love, or perhaps your pity led you, like a will-o'-the-wisp. At any rate, it's all over and nobody shall ever know and—and—I love you, Dan. I never thought I would be brave enough, or unmaidenly enough, to tell you this. But I know you love me, Dan. I knew it long before Tamea flashed across your life like a meteor and swept you off your silly old feet. I was weak, or I would have saved you —and when I found I could manage the strength, you were gone and it was too late. You've been such an old stupid. I should have made allowance for you, because I know you so well. . . . Well, I am here— and nothing that has happened matters any more. There, there you go with that sad old Abraham Lincoln look again—and now I'll have to be friend Maisie again."

She forced him down into a seat and he laid his arms on the cabin table and buried his face in them, in order that Maisie might not see the agony in his soul. "Nobody can ever understand except one who has had the experience," he tried to explain. "Tamea is all

white—and half native. She gazes upon life native-fashion—she's a tragic contradiction. I could never quite know what was in her mind when she gazed upon me so sweetly and tragically and she could never quite know what was in mine."

"Ah, but she did know, poor dear," Maisie contradicted. "She has proved that she knew."

"She is old—old, with the wisdom of the aged and the philosophy of patriarchs——"

"And the heart of a woman, Dan."

"No, the heart of a child."

Maisie smiled wistfully. Poor old booby Dan'l! He would never, never know that a woman is always a child! Because she had tact and more imagination than Dan Pritchard had ever given her credit for possessing, she left him and went up on deck.

At sunset the Pelorus passed out of the lagoon and as her bow lifted to the long, lazy rollers beyond the outer reef, Dan Pritchard, from her quarter-deck, through a mist gazed back on his Paradise lost. High up on the headland where Tamea's home nestled in the grove, a white figure, silhouetted against the sunset glow, waved to him. And presently, as the Pelorus drew clear of the coast and the full force of the trades bellied her canvas, to send her ramping toward the horizon, that white figure slowly faded; the last Dan Pritchard saw of Riva was the steadily deepening glow of the hot heart of Hakataua, pulsating against the

purple sky. And whatever thoughts occurred to him in that supreme moment were never given utterance, for Maisie came and stood beside him and said:

"Don't be ashamed of it, Dan, dear. I understand. Truly, I do."

"It will be terrible if you do not, Maisie, for I have lived to be too thoroughly understood—I who am not worth understanding."

CHAPTER XXXI

WHEN the last sunlight faded from the earth and the sea and the swift tropic twilight had swallowed the Pelorus, Tamea cast herself upon the earth and beat it with her beautiful hands, sobbing aloud, in the language of her mother's people, the agony of her broken heart. Upon her the gods had rained the supreme blow and she could no longer stand erect and take it smiling. Upon the pungent, fetid earth she groveled in her despair until, utterly spent, she lay like a beautiful wilted lily, an occasional long, constricted gasp alone giving evidence that she still lived—and suffered.

After a long time a voice spoke in the semi-darkness.

"Tamea! Stoneface is speaking."

The girl started up. "Mellengair! You have not gone?"

"Did I not tell you once, Tamea, that I loved you? That when you too were a Stoneface, with your flower face in the dust, I would love you more than ever, because your child's heart would have been broken? And did I not tell you that I would lift you up and hold you to my heart and comfort you? Behold, Tamea,

these hands outthrust to you." And with the words he lifted her from the ground and held her against his great breast. "Poor child!" he kept murmuring, and stroked her hair.

"Oh, why did you stay?" she sobbed. "I do not love you, Mel. You are to me a true friend only."

"I do not ask for love, Tamea," he replied gently. "I seek service. I thought I would stay until your baby should be born—it seemed I ought to wait awhile and see that all goes well with you, child."

"My race is dying. I too shall die, and that soon. Life has lost its taste, and when my baby has been born—my friend, when such as we have lost our taste for life, life departs. We do not live for the coward's love of life, but for life's joys."

"But the baby," he reminded her.

"I will give him to you, my friend. Would you not care to have my son and love him as your own?"

The poker face twitched, the unlovely eyes blinked a little. Mel bowed his head affirmatively.

"I have an illness—here," Tamea murmured, and placed her hand on her side. "It is the lung disease that comes to so many of us Polynesians, and when I knew my length of life was measured by but a year or two, I did not hesitate. I had to make haste, since I did not desire Dan to grow like Muggridge in his mind. Muggridge was here too long, too long removed from his kind; in striving to draw my people

upward, he drew himself downward. I would not have Dan remember me as a thin and haggard invalid, old before my time, no longer beautiful. Do you understand, Mellengair?"

"I understand."

"I have money. You know how much my father left me. When I am gone you will take it and my child, both for your own. You are a poor man in your own land, wherefore you must have money to dwell in contentment. And you will never tell Dan Pritchard I have borne him a child, because that would render him unhappy. And you will raise my child as a full white, in white ways, and none shall know that my baby's mother was a half-breed Polynesian. Understand, I am not ashamed of my blood, but"—through her tears she smiled the odd, wistful little smile—"it is inconvenient. There are some who might regard my blood as base and remind my child of it in years to come. In a three-quarter white none but the very wise, the very observant, can tell the blood of the other quarter."

He held her close to him and stroked her wonderful black hair. "Poor child," he kept saying, "poor child." And finally: "Remember, I do not ask for love, but service."

"I understand, dear, kind Stoneface. We are two with stone faces now, are we not, my friend? . . . Well, you shall take me to my house, and then you

shall go to the house of Muggridge and dwell there until the period of service shall be over. Or," she added, "until it shall begin!"

She lifted his big hand and kissed it. "My friend," she whispered, "my good, kind friend!"

"Poor child," said Mellenger. "Poor, poor child!"

THE END

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